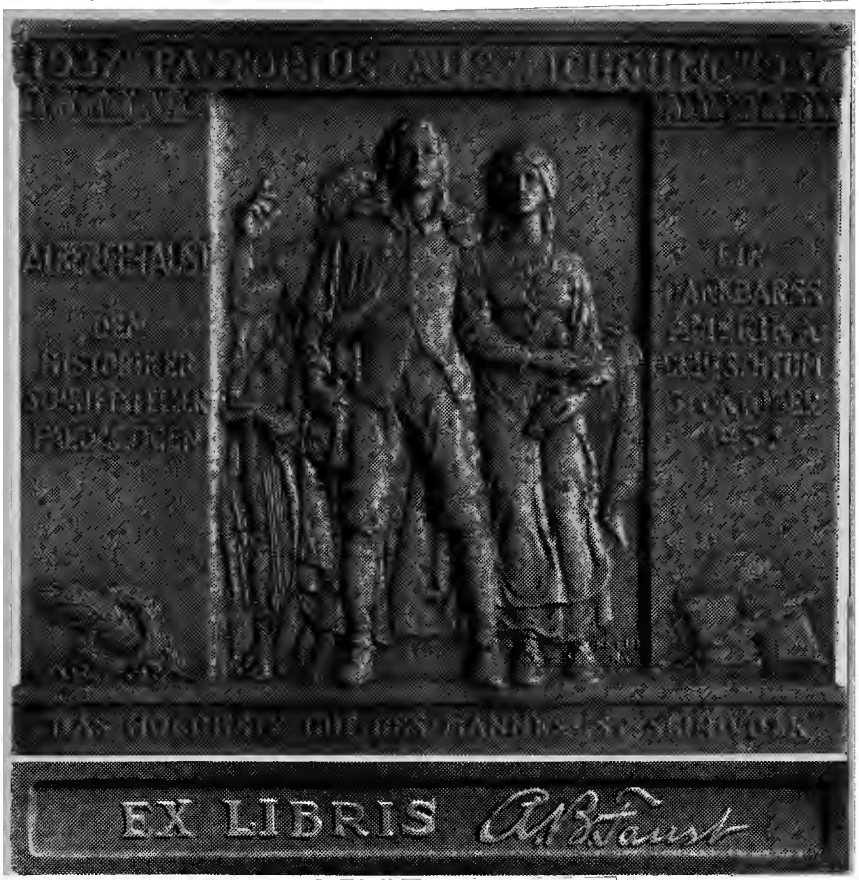

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A GOOD-FOR-NOTHING

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LEAVES FROM THE LIFE

OF A

GOOD-FOR-NOTHING

TRANSLATED FROM THE GERMAN OF

JOSEPH FREIHERR VON EICHENDORFF

BY

MRS. A. L. WISTER

ILLUSTRATIONS BY

PHILIPP GROT JOHANN AND PROFESSOR EDMUND KANOLDT

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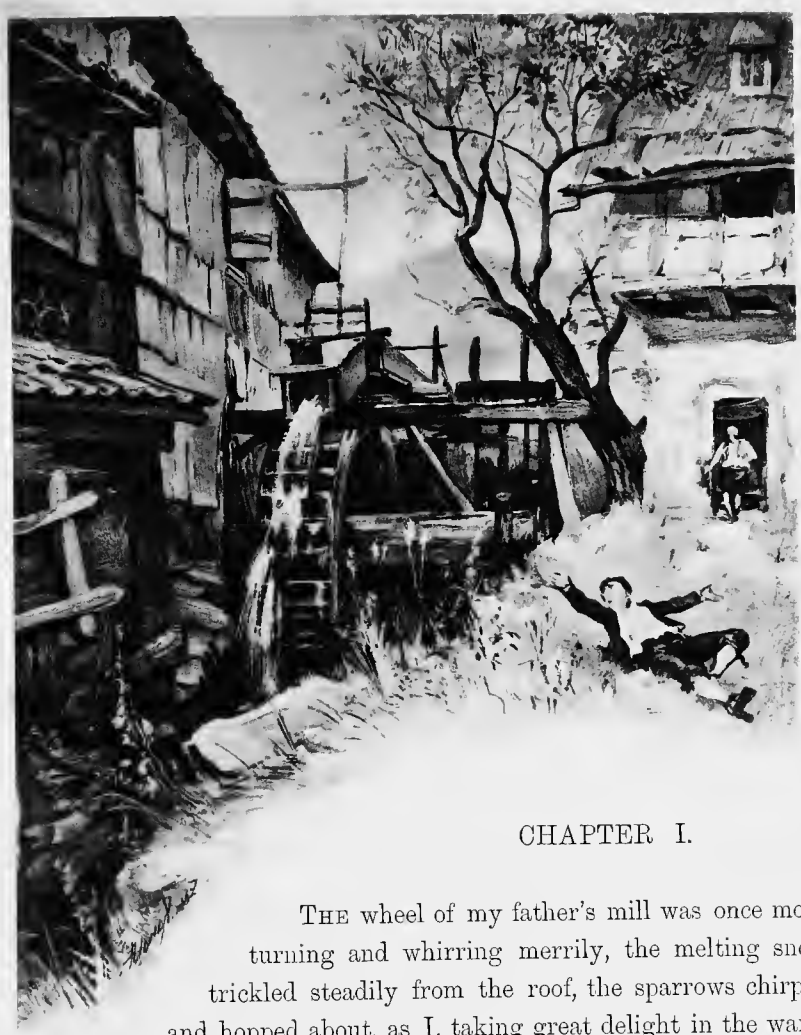


CHAPTER I.

THE wheel of my father's mill was once more turning and whirring merrily, the melting snow trickled steadily from the roof, the sparrows chirped and hopped about, as I, taking great delight in the warm sunshine, sat on the door-step and rubbed my eyes to rid them of sleep. Then my father made his appearance; he had been busy in the mill since daybreak, and his nightcap was all awry as he said to me,—

"You Good-for-nothing! There you sit sunning yourself, and stretching yourself, till your bones crack, leaving me to do all the work alone. I can keep you here no longer. Spring is at hand: Off with you into the world and earn your own bread!"

"Well," said I, "all right; if I am a Good-for-nothing, I will go forth into the world and make my fortune." In fact, I was very glad to have my father speak thus, for I myself had been thinking of starting on my travels; the yellow-hammer, which all through the autumn and winter had been chirping sadly at our window, "Farmer, hire me; farmer, hire me," was, now that the lovely spring weather had set in, once more piping cheerily from the old tree, "Farmer, nobody wants your work." So I went into the house and took down from the wall my fiddle, on which I could play quite skilfully; my father gave me a few pieces of money to set me on my way; and I sauntered off along the village street. I was filled with secret joy as I saw all my old acquaintances and comrades right and left going to their work digging and ploughing, just as they had done yesterday and the day before, and so on, whilst I was roaming out into the wide world. I called out 'Good-bye!' to the poor people on all sides, but no one took much notice of me. A perpetual Sabbath seemed to reign in my soul, and when I got out among the fields I took out my dear fiddle and played and sang, as I walked along the country road,—

"The favoured ones, the loved of Heaven,
God sends to roam the world at will;
His wonders to their gaze are given
By field and forest, stream and hill.

"The dullards who at home are staying
Are not refreshed by morning's ray;
They grovel, earth-born calls obeying,
And petty cares beset their day.

"The little brooks o'er rocks are springing,
The lark's gay carol fills the air:
Why should not I with them be singing
A joyous anthem free from care?

"I wander on, in God confiding,
For all are His, wood, field, and fell;
O'er earth and skies He still presiding,
For me will order all things well."

As I was looking around, a fine travelling-carriage drove along very near me; it had probably been just behind me for some time without my perceiving it, so filled with melody had I been, for it was going quite slowly, and two elegant ladies had their heads out of the window, listening. One was especially beautiful, and younger than the other, but both pleased me extremely. When I stopped singing the elder ordered the coachman to stop his horses, and accosted me with great condescension, "Aha, my merry lad, you know how to sing very pretty songs." I, nothing loath, replied, "Please your Grace, I know some far prettier." "And where are you going so early in the morning?" she asked. I was ashamed to confess that I did not myself know, and so I said, boldly, "To Vienna." The two ladies then talked together in a strange tongue which I did not understand. The younger shook her head several times, but the other only laughed, and finally called to me, "Jump up behind; we too are going to Vienna." Who more ready than I! I made my best bow, and sprang up behind the carriage, the coachman cracked his whip, and away we bowled along the smooth road so swiftly that the wind whistled in my ears.

Behind me vanished my native village with its gardens and church-tower, before me appeared fresh villages, castles, and mountains, beneath me on either side the meadows in the tender green of spring

flew past, and above me countless larks were soaring in the blue air. I was ashamed to shout aloud, but I exulted inwardly, and shuffled about so on the foot-board behind the carriage that I wellnigh lost my fiddle from under my arm. But when the sun rose higher in the sky, while heavy, white, noonday clouds gathered on the horizon, and the air hung sultry and still above the gently-waving grain, I could not but remember my village and my father, and our mill, and how cool and comfortable it was beside the shady mill-pool, and how far, far away from me it all was. And the most curious sensation overcame me: I felt as if I must turn and run back; but I stuck my fiddle between my coat and my vest, settled myself on the foot-board, and went to sleep.

When I opened my eyes again, the carriage was standing beneath tall linden-trees, on the other side of which a broad flight of steps led between columns into a magnificent castle. Through the trees beyond I saw the towers of Vienna. The ladies, it appeared, had left the carriage, and the horses had been unharnessed. I was startled to find myself alone, and I hurried into the castle. As I did so I heard some one at a window above laughing.

An odd time I had in this castle. First, as soon as I found myself in the cool, spacious vestibule, some one tapped me on the shoulder with a stick. I turned quickly about, and there stood a tall gentleman in state apparel, with a broad bandolier of silk and gold crossing his breast from his shoulder to his hip, a staff in his hand, gilded at the top, and an extraordinarily large Roman nose; he strutted up to me, swelling like a ruffled-up turkey-cock, and asked me what I wanted there. I was taken entirely aback, and in my confusion was unable to utter a word. Several servants passed, going up and down the staircase; they said nothing, but eyed me superciliously. Then a lady's-maid appeared; she came up to me, declared that I was a charming

young fellow, and that her mistress had sent to ask me if I did not want a place as gardener's boy. I put my hand in my pocket,—the few coins I had possessed were gone. They must have been jerked out by my shuffling on the foot-board behind the carriage. I had nothing to depend upon save my skill with the fiddle, for which the gentleman with the staff, as he informed me in passing, would not give a farthing. Therefore, in my distress, I said 'yes' to the maid, keeping my eyes fixed the while upon the portentous figure pacing the hall to and fro like the pendulum of a clock in a church-tower, appearing from the background with imposing majesty and with unfailing regularity. At last a gardener came, muttering something about boors and vagabonds, and led me off to the garden, preaching me a long sermon on the way about my being diligent and industrious and never loitering about the world any more, and how, if I would give up all my idle and foolish ways, I might come to some good in the end. There was a great deal of exhortation in this strain, very good and useful, but I have since forgotten it nearly all. In fact, I really hardly know how it all came about; I went on saying 'yes' to everything, and I felt like a bird with its wings clipped. But, thank God, in the end I was earning my living!

I found life delightful in that garden. I had a hot dinner every day and plenty of it, and more money than I needed for my glass of wine, only, unfortunately, I had quite a deal to do. The pavilions, and arbours, and long green walks delighted me, if I could only have sauntered about and talked pleasantly like the gentlemen and ladies who came there every day. Whenever the gardener was away and I was alone, I took out my short tobacco-pipe, sat down, and thought of all the beautiful, polite things with which I could have entertained that lovely young lady who had brought me to the castle, had I been a cavalier walking beside her. Or on sultry afternoons I lay on my

back on the grass, when all was so quiet that you could hear the bees humming, and I gazed up at the clouds sailing away towards my native village, and around me at the waving grass and flowers, and thought of the lovely lady; and it sometimes chanced that I really saw her in the distance walking in the garden, with her guitar or a book, tall and beautiful as an angel, and I was only half conscious whether I were awake or dreaming.

Thus, once as I was passing a summer-house on my way to work, I was singing to myself,—

"I gaze around me, going
By forest, dale, and lea,
O'er heights where streams are flowing,
My every thought bestowing,
Ah, Lady fair, on thee."

when, through the half-opened lattice of the cool, dark summer-house buried amid flowers, I saw the sparkle of a pair of beautiful, youthful eyes. I was so startled that I could not finish my song, but passed on to my work without looking round.

In the evening—it was Saturday, and, in joyous anticipation of the coming Sunday, I was standing, fiddle in hand, at the window of the gardener's house, still thinking of the sparkling eyes—the lady's-maid came tripping through the twilight,—"The gracious Lady fair sends you this to drink her health, and a 'Good-Night' besides!" And in a twinkling she put a flask of wine on the window-sill and vanished among the flowers and shrubs like a lizard.

I stood looking at the wonderful flask for a long time, not knowing what to think. And if before I played the fiddle merrily, I now played it ten times more so, and I sang the song of the Lady fair all through, and all the other songs that I knew, until the nightingales

wakened outside and the moon and stars lit up the garden. Ah, that was a lovely night!

No cradle-song tells the child's future; a blind hen finds many a grain of wheat; he laughs best who laughs last; the unexpected often happens; man proposes, God disposes: thus did I meditate the next day, sitting in the garden with my pipe, and as I looked down at myself I seemed to myself to be a downright dunce. Contrary to all my habits hitherto, I now rose betimes every day, before the gardener and the other assistants were stirring. It was most beautiful then in

the garden. The flowers, the fountains, the rose-bushes, the whole place, glittered in the morning sunshine like pure gold and jewels. And in the avenues of huge beeches it was as quiet, cool, and solemn as a church, only the little birds fluttered around and pecked in the gravel paths. In front of the castle, just under the windows, there was a large bush in full bloom. Thither I used to go in the early morning, and crouch down beneath the branches where I could watch the windows, for I had not the courage to appear in the open. Thence I sometimes saw the Lady fair in a snow-white robe come, still drowsy and warm, to the open window. She would stand there braiding her dark-brown hair, gazing abroad over the garden and shrubbery, or she would tend and water the flowers upon her window-sill, or would rest her guitar upon her white arm and sing out into the clear air so wondrously that to this day my heart faints with sadness when one of her songs recurs to me. And ah, it was all so long ago!

So my life passed for a week and more. But once,—she was standing at the window and all was quiet around,—a confounded fly flew directly up my nose, and I was seized with an interminable fit of sneezing. She leaned far out of the window and discovered me cowering in the shrubbery. I was overcome with mortification and did not go there again for many a day.

At last I ventured to return to my post, but the window remained closed. I hid in the bushes for four, five, six mornings, but she did not appear. Then I grew tired of my hiding-place and came out boldly, and every morning promenaded bravely beneath all the windows of the castle. But the lovely Lady fair was not to be seen. At a window a little farther on I saw the other lady standing; I had never before seen her so distinctly. She had a fine rosy face, and was plump, and as gorgeously attired as a tulip. I always made her a low bow, and she

acknowledged it, and her eyes twinkled very kindly and courteously. Once only, I thought I saw the Lady fair standing behind the curtain at her window, peeping out.

Many days passed and I did not see her, either in the garden or

at the window. The gardener scolded me for laziness; I was out of humour, tired of myself and of all about me.

I was lying on the grass one Sunday afternoon, watching the blue wreaths of smoke from my pipe, and fretting because I had not chosen some other trade which would not have bored me so day after day. The other fellows had all gone off to the dance in the neighbouring village. Every one was strolling about in Sunday attire, the houses were gay, and there was melody in the very air. But I walked off and sat solitary, like a bittern among the reeds, by a lonely pond in the garden, rocking myself in a little skiff tied there, while the vesper bells sounded faintly from the town and the swans glided to and fro on the placid water. A sadness as of death possessed me.

On a sudden I heard, in the distance, voices talking gaily, and bursts of merry laughter. They sounded nearer and nearer, and red and white kerchiefs and hats and feathers were visible through the shrubbery. A party of gentlemen and ladies were coming from the castle, across the meadow, directly towards me, and my two ladies among them. I stood up and was about to retire, when the elder perceived me. "Aha, you are just what we want," she called to me, smiling. "Row us across the pond to the other side." The ladies cautiously took their seats in the boat, assisted by the gentlemen, who made quite a parade of their familiarity with the water. When all the ladies were seated, I pushed off from the shore. One of the young gentlemen who stood in the prow began, unperceived, to rock the boat. The ladies looked frightened, and one or two screamed. The Lady fair, who had a lily in her hand, and was sitting well in the centre of the skiff, looked down with a quiet smile into the clear water, touching the surface of the pond now and then with the lily, her image, amid the reflections of the clouds and trees, appearing like an angel soaring gently through the deep blue skies.

As I was gazing at her, the other of my two ladies, the plump, merry one, suddenly took it into her head that I must sing as we glided along. A very elegant young gentleman with an eye-glass, who sat beside her, instantly turned to her, and, as he kissed her hand, said, "Thanks for the poetic idea! A folk-song sung by one of the people in the open air is an Alpine rose, upon the very Alps,—the Alpine horns are nothing but herbaria,—the soul of the national consciousness." But I said I did not know anything fine enough to sing to such great people. Then the pert lady's-maid, who was beside me with a basket of cups and bottles, and whom I had not perceived before, said, "He knows a very pretty little song about a lady fair." "Yes, yes, sing that one!" the lady exclaimed. I felt hot all over, and the Lady fair lifted her eyes from the water and gave me a look that went to my very soul. So I did not hesitate any longer, but took heart and sang with all my might,—

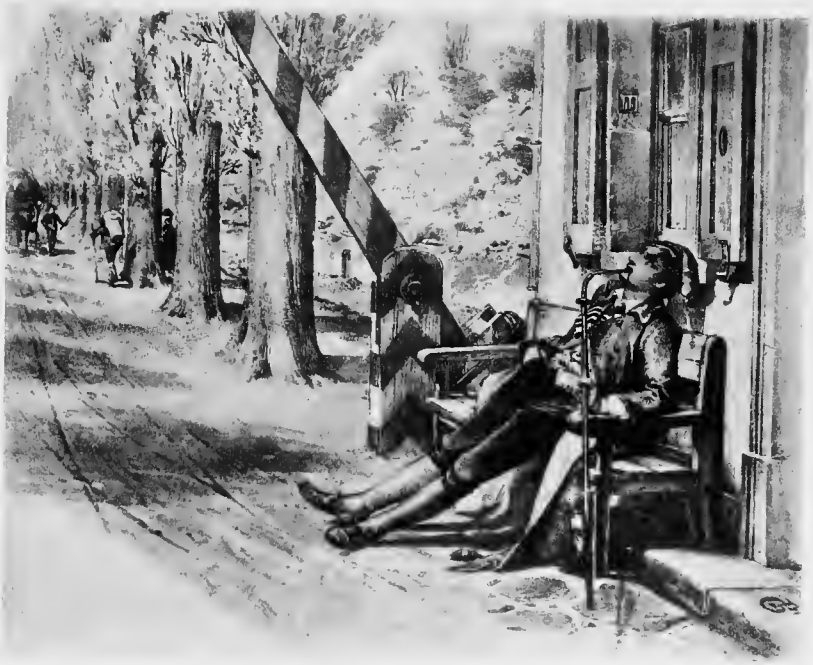
"I gaze around me, going
By forest, dale, and lea,
O'er heights where streams are flowing,
My every thought bestowing,
Ah, Lady fair, on thee.

"And in my garden, finding
Bright flowers fresh and rare,
While many a wreath I'm binding,
Sweet thoughts therein I'm winding
Of thee, my Lady fair.

"For me 'twould be too daring
To lay them at her feet.
They'll soon away be wearing,
But love beyond comparing
Is thine, my Lady sweet.

"In early morning waking,
I toil with ready smile,
And though my heart be breaking,
I'll sing to hide its aching,
And dig my grave the while."

The boat touched the shore, and all the party got out; many of the young gentlemen, as I had perceived, had made game of me in whispers to the ladies while I was singing. The gentleman with the eye-glass took my hand as he left the boat, and said something to me, I do not remember what, and the elder of my two ladies gave me a kindly glance. The Lady fair had never raised her eyes all the time I was singing, and she went away without a word. As for me, before my song was ended the tears stood in my eyes; my heart seemed like to burst with shame and misery. I understood now for the first time how beautiful she was, and how poor and despised and forsaken I, and when they had all disappeared behind the bushes I could contain myself no longer, but threw myself down on the grass and wept bitterly.



CHAPTER II.

The high-road was close on one side of the castle garden, and separated from it only by a high wall. A very pretty little toll-house with a red-tiled roof stood near, with a gay little flower-garden enclosed by a picket-fence behind it. A breach in the wall connected this garden with the most secluded and shady part of the castle garden itself. The toll-gate keeper who occupied the cottage died suddenly, and early one morning, when I was still sound asleep, the Secretary from the castle waked me in a great hurry and bade me come immediately to the Bailiff. I dressed myself as quickly as I could,

and followed the brisk Secretary, who, as we went, plucked a flower here and there and stuck it into his button-hole, made scientific lunges in the air with his cane, and talked steadily to me all the while, although my eyes and ears were so filled with sleep that I could not understand anything he said. When we reached the office, where as yet it was hardly light, the Bailiff, behind a huge inkstand, and piles of books and papers, looked at me from out of his huge wig like an owl from out its nest, and began: "What's your name? Where do you come from? Can you read, write, and cipher?" And when I assented, he went on, "Well, her Grace, in consideration of your good manners and extraordinary merit, appoints you to the vacant post of Receiver of Toll." I hurriedly passed in mental review the conduct and manners that had hitherto distinguished me, and was forced to admit that the Bailiff was right. And so, before I knew it, I was Receiver of Toll.

I took possession of my dwelling, and was soon comfortably established there. The deceased toll-gate keeper had left behind him for his successor various articles, which I appropriated, among others a magnificent scarlet dressing-gown dotted with yellow, a pair of green slippers, a tasselled nightcap, and several long-stemmed pipes. I had often wished for these things at home, where I used to see our village pastor thus comfortably provided. All day long, therefore,—I had nothing else to do,—I sat on the bench before my house in dressing-gown and nightcap, smoking the longest pipe from the late toll-gate keeper's collection, and looking at the people walking, driving, and riding on the high-road. I only wished that some of the folks from our village, who had always said that I never would be worth anything, might happen to pass by and see me thus. The dressing-gown became my complexion, and suited me extremely well. So I sat there and pondered many things,—the difficulty of all beginnings, the great

advantages of an easier mode of existence, for example,—and privately resolved to give up travel for the future, save money like other people, and in time do something really great in the world. Meanwhile, with all my resolves, anxieties, and occupations, I in no wise forgot the Lady fair.

I dug up and threw out of my little garden all the potatoes and other vegetables that I found there, and planted it instead with the choicest flowers, which proceeding caused the Porter from the castle with the big Roman nose—who since I had been made Receiver often came to see me, and had become my intimate friend—to eye me askance as a person crazed by sudden good fortune. But that did not deter me. For from my little garden I could often hear feminine voices not far off in the castle garden, and among them I thought I could distinguish the voice of my Lady fair, although, because of the thick shrubbery, I could see nobody. And so every day I plucked a nosegay of my finest flowers, and when it was dark in the evening, I climbed over the wall and laid it upon a marble table in an arbour near by, and every time that I brought a fresh nosegay the old one was gone from the table.

One evening all the castle inmates were away hunting; the sun was just setting, flooding the landscape with flame and colour, the Danube wound towards the horizon like a band of gold and fire, and the vine-dressers on all the hills throughout the country were glad and gay. I was sitting with the Porter on the bench before my cottage, enjoying the mild air and the gradual fading to twilight of the brilliant day. Suddenly the horns of the returning hunting-party sounded on the air; the notes were tossed from hill to hill by the echoes. My soul delighted in it all, and I sprang up and exclaimed, in an intoxication of joy, "That is what I ought to follow in life, the huntsman's noble calling!" But the Porter quietly knocked the

ashes out of his pipe and said, "You only think so; I've tried it. You hardly earn the shoes you wear out, and you're never without a cough, or a cold from perpetually getting your feet wet." I cannot tell how it was, but upon hearing him speak thus, I was seized with such a fit of foolish rage that I fairly trembled. On a sudden the entire fellow, with his bedizened coat, his big feet, his snuff, his big nose, and everything about him, became odious to me. Quite beside myself, I seized him by the breast of his coat and said, "Home with you, Porter, on the instant, or I'll send you there in a way you won't like!" At these words the Porter was more than ever convinced that I was crazy. He gazed at me with evident fear, extricated himself from my grasp, and went without a word, looking reproachfully back at me, and striding towards the castle, where he reported me as stark, staring mad.

But after all I burst into a hearty laugh, glad in fact to be rid of the pompous fellow, for it was just the hour when I was wont to carry my nosegay to the arbour. I clambered over the wall, and was just about to place the flowers on the marble table, when I heard the sound of a horse's hoofs at some distance. There was no time for escape; my Lady fair was riding slowly along the avenue in a green hunting-habit, apparently lost in thought. All that I had read in an old book of my father's about the beautiful Magelona came into my head,—how she used to appear among the tall forest-trees when horns were echoing and evening shadows were flitting through the glades. I could not stir from the spot. She started when she perceived me and paused involuntarily. I was as if intoxicated with intense joy, dread, and the throbbing of my heart, and when I saw that she actually wore at her breast the flowers I had left yesterday, I could no longer keep silent, but said in a rapture, "Fairest Lady fair, accept these flowers too, and all the flowers in my garden,

and everything I have! Ah, if I could only brave some danger for you!" At first she had looked at me so gravely, almost angrily, that I shivered, but then she cast down her eyes, and did not lift them while I was speaking. At that moment voices and the tramp of horses were heard in the distance. She snatched the flowers from my hand, and without saying a word, swiftly vanished at the end of the avenue.

After this evening I had neither rest nor peace. I felt continually, as I had always felt when spring was at hand, restless and merry, and as if some great good fortune or something extraordinary were about to befall me. My wretched accounts in especial never would come right, and when the sunshine, playing among the chestnut boughs before my window, cast golden-green gleams upon my figures, illuminating "Bro't over" and "Total," my addition grew sometimes so confused that I actually could not count three. The figure 'eight' always looked to me like my stout, tightly-laced lady with the gay head-dress, and the provoking 'seven' like a finger-post pointing the wrong way, or a gallows. The 'nine' was the queerest, suddenly, before I knew what it was about, standing on its head to look like 'six,' whilst 'two' would turn into a pert interrogation-point, as if to ask me, "What in the world is to become of you, you poor zero? Without the others, the slender 'one' and all the rest, you never can come to anything!"

I had no longer any ease in sitting before my door. I took out a stool to make myself more comfortable, and put my feet upon it; I patched up an old parasol, and held it over me like a Chinese pleasure-dome. But all would not do. As I sat smoking and speculating, my legs seemed to stretch to twice their size from weariness, and my nose lengthened visibly as I looked down at it for hours. And when sometimes, before daybreak, an express drove up, and I went out,

half asleep, into the cool air, and a pretty face, but dimly seen in the dawning except for its sparkling eyes, looked out at me from the coach window and kindly bade me good-morning, while from the villages around the cock's clear crow echoed across the fields of gently-waving grain, and an early lark, high in the skies among the flushes of morning, soared here and there, and the Postilion wound his horn

and blew, and blew,—as the coach drove off, I would stand looking after it, feeling as if I could not but start off with it on the instant into the wide, wide world.

I still took my flowers every day, when the sun had set, to the marble table in the dim arbour. But since that evening all had been over. Not a soul took any notice of them, and when I went to look after them early the next morning, there they lay as I had left them,

gazing sadly at me with their heads hanging, and the dew-drops glistening upon their fading petals as if they were weeping. This distressed me, and I plucked no more flowers. I let the weeds grow in my garden as they pleased, and the flowers stayed on their stalks until the wind blew them away. Within me there were the same desolation and neglect.

In this critical state of affairs it happened once that, as I was leaning out of my window gazing dully into vacancy, the lady's-maid from the castle came tripping across the road. When she saw me she came and stood just outside the window. "His Grace returned from his travels yesterday," she remarked, hurriedly. "Indeed?" I said, surprised, for I had taken no interest in anything for several weeks, and did not even know that his Grace had been travelling. "Then his lovely daughter will be very glad." The maid looked at me with a strange expression of face, so that I began to wonder whether I had said anything especially stupid. "He knows absolutely nothing!" she said at last, turning up her little nose. "Well," she resumed, "there is to be a ball and masquerade this evening at the castle in honour of his Grace. My lady is to be dressed as a flower-girl,—understand, as a flower-girl. And she has noticed that you have particularly pretty flowers in your garden." "That's strange," I thought to myself; "there is hardly a flower to be seen there for the weeds!" But she continued: "And since my lady needs perfectly fresh flowers for her costume, you are to bring her some this evening, and wait under the big pear-tree in the castle garden when it is dark until she comes for the flowers herself."

I was completely dazed with joy at this intelligence, and in my rapture I leaped out of the window and ran after the maid.

"Ugh, what an ugly dressing-gown!" she exclaimed, when she saw me with my fluttering robe in the open air. This vexed me,

but, not to be behindhand in gallantry, I capered gaily after her to give her a kiss. Unluckily, my feet became entangled in my dressing-gown, which was much too long for me, and I fell flat on the ground. When I had picked myself up the maid was gone, and I heard her in the distance laughing fit to kill herself.

Now I had delightful food for my reflections. After all, she still remembered me and my flowers! I went into my garden and hastily tore up all the weeds from the beds, throwing them high above my head into the sunlit air, as if with the roots I were eradicating all melancholy and annoyance from my life. Once more the roses were like *her* lips, the sky-blue convolvulus was like *her* eyes, the snowy lily with its pensive, drooping head was *her* very image. I put them all tenderly in a little basket; the evening was calm and lovely, not a speck of a cloud in the sky. Here and there a star appeared; the murmur of the Danube was heard afar over the meadows; in the tall trees of the castle garden countless birds were twittering to one another merrily. Ah, I was so happy!

When at last night came I took my basket on my arm and set out for the large garden. The flowers in the little basket looked so gay, white, red, blue, and smelled so sweet, that my very heart laughed when I peeped in at them.

Filled with joyous thoughts, I walked in the lovely moonlight over the trim paths strewn with gravel, across the little white bridge, beneath which the swans were sleeping on the bosom of the water, and past the pretty arbours and summer-houses. I soon found the big pear-tree; it was the same under which, while I was gardener's boy, I used to lie on sultry afternoons.

All around me here was dark and lonely. A tall aspen quivered and kept whispering with its silver leaves. The music from the castle was heard at intervals, and now and then there were voices in the

garden; sometimes they passed quite near me, and then all would be still again.

My heart beat fast. I had a strange uncomfortable sensation as if I were a robber. I stood for a long time stock-still, leaning against

the tree and listening; but when no one appeared I could bear it no longer. I hung my basket on my arm and clambered up into the pear-tree to breathe a purer air.

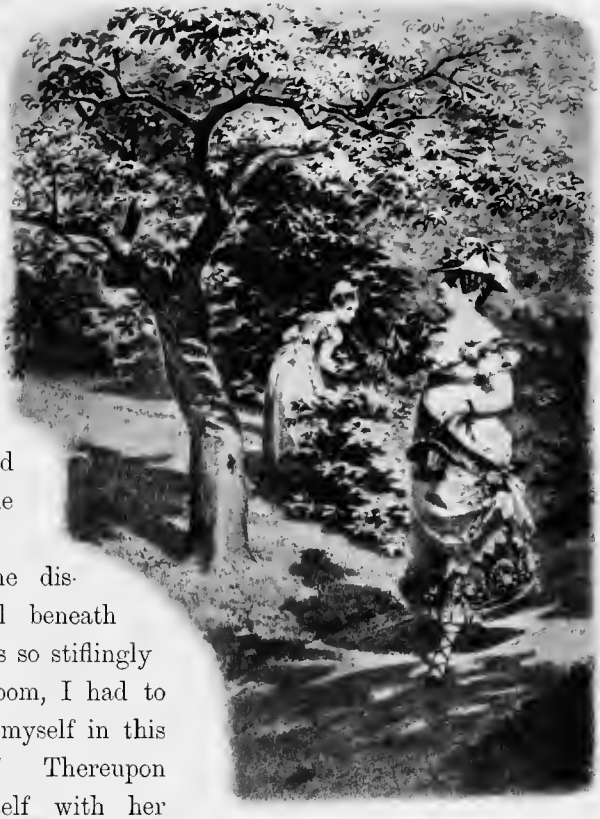
The music of the dance floated up to me over the tree-tops. I overlooked the entire garden and gazed directly into the brilliantly-illuminated windows of the castle. Chandeliers glittered there like galaxies of stars; a multitude of gayly-dressed gentlemen and ladies wandered and waltzed and whirled about unrecognizable, like the gay figures of a magic-lantern; at times some of them leaned out of the windows and looked down into the garden. In front of the castle the brilliant light gilded the grass, the shrubbery, and the trees, so that the flowers and the birds seemed to be aroused by it. All around and below me, however, the garden lay black and still.

"*She* is dancing there now," I thought to myself up in the tree, "and has long since forgotten you and your flowers. All are gay; not a human being cares for you in the least. And thus it is with me, always and everywhere. Every one has his little nook marked out for him on this earth, his warm hearth, his cup of coffee, his wife, his glass of wine in the evening, and is perfectly happy; even the Porter with his big nose is content. For me there is no place, I seem to be just too late everywhere; the world has not a bit of need of me."

As I was philosophizing thus, I suddenly heard something rustle on the grass below me. Two soft voices were speaking together in a low tone. In a moment the foliage of the shrubbery was parted, and the lady's-maid's little face appeared among the leaves, peering about on all sides. The moonlight sparkled in her saucy eyes as they peeped out. I held my breath and stared down at her. Before long the flower-girl did actually appear among the trees, just as the maid had described her to me yesterday. My heart throbbed as if it would burst. She had on a mask, and seemed to be gazing around in surprise. Somehow she did not look to me as slender and graceful

as she had been. At last she reached the tree, and took off her mask. It was the other,—the elder lady!

How glad I was, when I had recovered from the first shock, that I was up here in safety! How in the world did she chance to come here? If the dear, lovely Lady fair should happen to come at this instant for her flowers, there would be a fine to-do! I could have cried for vexation at the whole affair.



Meanwhile the disguised flower-girl beneath me began: "It is so stiflingly hot in the ball-room, I had to come out to cool myself in this lovely open air." Thereupon she fanned herself with her mask and puffed and blew. In the bright moonlight I could plainly see how swollen were the cords of her neck; she looked very angry and quite scarlet in the face. The lady's-maid was all the while searching behind every bush, as if she were looking for a lost pin.

"I do so need more fresh flowers for my character," the flower-girl continued. "Where can he be?" The maid went on searching, and kept chuckling to herself. "What did you say, Rosetta?" the flower-girl asked, shrewishly. "I say what I always have said," the maid replied, putting on a very serious, honest face: "the Receiver is a lazy fellow; of course he is lying behind some bush sound asleep."

My blood tingled with longing to jump down and defend my reputation, when on a sudden a burst of music and loud shouts were heard from the castle.

The flower-girl could stay no longer. "The people are cheering his Grace," she said, passionately. "Come, we shall be missed!" And she clapped on her mask in a hurry, and ran in a rage with the maid towards the castle. The trees and bushes seemed to point after her with long, derisive fingers, the moonlight danced nimbly up and down over her stout figure as though over the key-board of a piano, and thus to the sound of trumpets and kettle-drums she made her exit, like many a singer whom I have seen upon the stage.

I, seated above in my tree, was downright bewildered, and gazed fixedly at the castle; a circle of tall torches upon the steps of the entrance cast a strange glare upon the glittering windows and deep into the garden; the assembled servants were to serenade their master. In the midst of them stood the gorgeous Porter, like a minister of state, before a music-stand, working away busily at a bassoon.

Just as I had settled myself to listen to the beautiful serenade, the folding-doors leading to the balcony above the entrance parted. A tall gentleman, very handsome and dignified, in uniform and glittering with orders, stepped out on the balcony, leading by the hand the lovely young Lady fair, dressed in white like a lily in the night, or like the moon in the clear skies.

I could not take my eyes from her, and garden, trees, and fields

disappeared before me, as she stood there tall and slender, so wondrously illuminated by the torch-light, now speaking with such grace to the young officer, and now nodding down kindly to the musicians. The people below were beside themselves with delight, and at last I too could restrain myself no longer, and joined in the cheers with all my might.

But when, soon after, she disappeared from the balcony, one after another the torches below were extinguished and the music-stands cleared away, and the garden around was once more dark, and the trees rustled as before,—then it all became clear to me: I saw that it was really only the aunt who had ordered the flowers of me, that the Lady fair never thought of me and had been married long ago, and that I myself was a big fool.

All this plunged me into an abyss of reflection. I rolled myself round like a hedgehog on the prickles of my own thoughts. Snatches of music still reached me now and then from the ball-room,—the clouds floated lonely away above the dim garden. And there I sat, all through the night, up in the tree, like a night-owl, amid the ruins of my happiness.

The cool breeze of morning aroused me at last from my dreamings. I was startled as I looked about me. The music and dancing had long since ceased, and everything around the castle and on the lawn, and the marble steps and columns, all looked quiet, cool, and solemn; the fountain alone plashed on before the entrance. Here and there in the boughs near me the birds were awaking, shaking their bright feathers, and as they stretched their little wings, peering curiously and amazed at their strange fellow-sleeper. The joyous rays of morning flashed across my breast and over the garden.

I stood erect in my tree, and for the first time for a long while looked far abroad over the country, to where the ships glided down

the Danube among the vineyards, and the high-roads, still deserted, stretched like bridges across the gleaming landscape, and far over the distant hills and valleys.

I cannot tell how it was, but all at once my former love of travel took possession of me, all the old melancholy, and delight, and ardent expectation. And at the same moment I thought of the Lady fair over in the castle sleeping among flowers, beneath silken coverlets, with an angel surely keeping watch beside her bed in the silence of the dawn. "No!" I cried aloud. "I must go away from here, far, far away,—as far as the sky stretches its blue arch!"

As I uttered the words I tossed my basket high into the air, so that it was beautiful to see how the flowers fell among the branches and lay in gay colours on the green sod below. Then I got down as quickly as possible, and went through the quiet garden to my dwelling. I paused many times at spots where I had seen her pass, or where I had lain in the shade and thought of her.

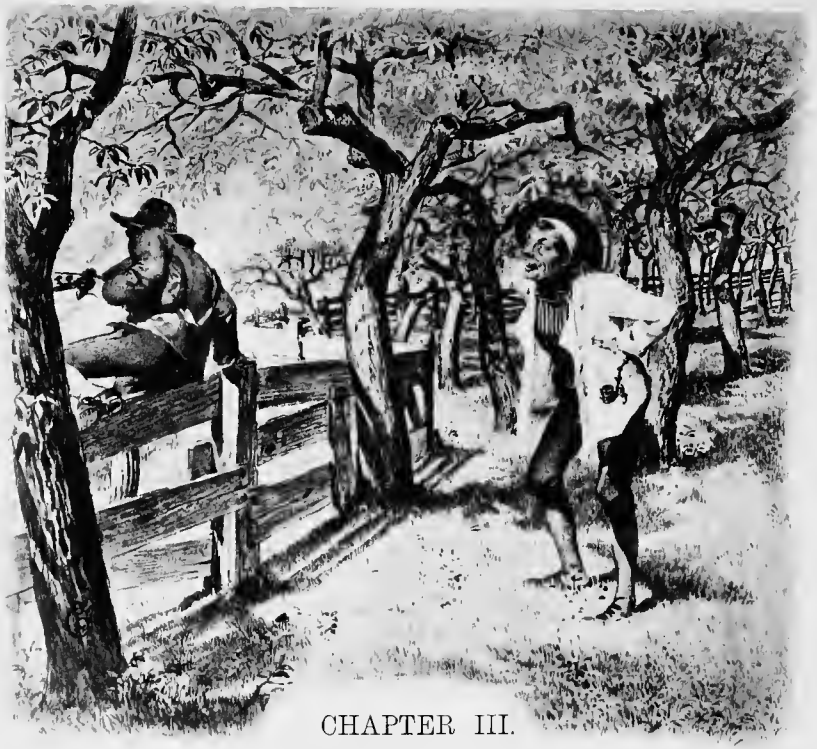
In and about my cottage all was just as I had left it the day before. The garden was torn up and laid waste, the big account-book lay open on the table in my room, my fiddle, which I had almost clean forgotten, hung dusty on the wall; a ray of morning light glittered upon the strings. It struck a chord in my heart. "Yes," I said, "come here, thou faithful instrument! Our kingdom is not of this world!"

So I took the fiddle from the wall, and leaving behind me the account-book, dressing-gown, slippers, pipes, and parasol, I walked out of my cottage, as poor as when I entered it, and down along the gleaming high-road.

I looked back often and often; I felt very strange, sad, and yet merry, like a bird escaping from his cage. And when I had walked some distance I took out my fiddle and sang,—

"I wander on, in God confiding,
For all are His, wood, field, and fell;
O'er earth and skies He still presiding,
For me will order all things well."

The castle, the garden, and the spires of Vienna vanished behind me in the morning mists; far above me countless larks exulted in the air; thus, past gay villages and hamlets and over green hills, I wandered on towards Italy.



CHAPTER III.

HERE was a puzzle! It had never occurred to me that I did not know my way. Not a human being was to be seen in the quiet early morning whom I could question, and right before me the road divided into many roads, which went on far, far over the highest mountains, as though to the very end of the world,—so that I actually grew giddy as I looked along them.

At last a peasant appeared, going to church I fancy, as it was Sunday, in an old-fashioned coat with large silver buttons, and swinging a long malacca cane with a massive silver head, which sparkled from afar in the sunlight. I immediately asked him very politely,

"Can you tell me which is the road to Italy?" The fellow stood still, stared at me, thrust out his under lip reflectively, and stared at me again. I began once more: "To Italy, where oranges grow." "What do I care for your oranges!" said the peasant, and walked on sturdily. I should have credited the fellow with more politeness, for he really looked very fine.

What was to be done? Turn round and go back to my native village? Why, the folks would have jeered me, and the boys would have run after me crying, "Oh, indeed! you're welcome back from 'out in the world.' How does it look 'out in the world'? Haven't you brought us some ginger-nuts from 'out in the world'?" The Porter with the high Roman nose, who certainly was familiar with Universal History, used often to say to me, "Respected Herr Receiver, Italy is a beautiful country; the dear God takes care of every one there. You can lie on your back in the sunshine and raisins drop into your mouth; and if a tarantula bites you, you dance with the greatest ease, although you never in your life before learned to dance." "Ay, to Italy! to Italy!" I shouted with delight, and, heedless of any choice of roads, hurried on along the first that came.

After I had gone a little way I saw on the right a most beautiful orchard, with the morning sun shimmering on the trunks and through the tree-tops so brilliantly that it looked as if the ground were spread with golden rugs. As no one was in sight, I clambered over the low fence and lay down comfortably on the grass under an apple-tree; all my limbs were still aching from camping out in the tree on the previous night. From where I lay I could see far abroad over the country, and as it was Sunday the sound of the church-bells from the far distance came to me over the quiet fields, and gaily-dressed peasants were walking across the meadows and along the lanes to church. I was glad at heart; the birds sang in the tree overhead; I

thought of my father's mill, and of the garden of the lovely Lady fair, and of how far, far away it all was,—until I fell sound asleep. I dreamed that the Lady fair came walking, or rather slowly flying, towards me from the lovely landscape to the music of the church-bells, in long white robes that waved in the rosy morning. Then again it seemed that we were not in a strange country, but in my native village, in the deep shade beside the mill. But everything was still and deserted, as it is when the people are all gone to church, and only the solemn sounds of the organ wafted down through the trees break the stillness; I was oppressed with melancholy. But the Lady fair was very kind and gentle, and put her hand in mine and walked along with me, and sang, amid this solitude, the beautiful song that she used to sing to her guitar early in the morning at her open window, and in the placid mill-pool I saw her image, lovelier even than herself, except that the eyes were wondrous large and looked at me so strangely that I was almost afraid. Then suddenly the mill-wheel began to turn, at first slowly, then faster and more noisily; the pool became dark and troubled, the Lady fair turned very pale, and her robes grew longer and longer, and fluttered wildly in long strips like pennons of mist up towards the skies; the roaring of the mill-wheel sounded ever louder, and it seemed as though it were the Porter blowing upon his bassoon, so that I waked up with my heart throbbing violently.

In fact, a breeze had arisen, which was gently stirring the leaves of the apple-tree above me; but the noise and roaring came neither from the mill nor from the Porter's bassoon, but from the same peasant who had before refused to show me the way to Italy. He had taken off his Sunday coat and put on a white smock-frock. "Oho!" he said, as I rubbed my sleepy eyes, "do you want to pick your oranges here, that you trample down all my grass instead of

going to church, you lazy lout, you?" I was vexed that the boor should have waked me, and I started up and cried, "Hold your tongue! I have been a better gardener than you will ever be, and a Receiver, and if you had been driving to town, you would have had to take off your dirty cap to me, sitting at my door in my yellow-dotted, red dressing-gown—" But the fellow was nothing daunted, and, putting his arms akimbo, merely said, "What do you want here? eh! eh!" I saw that he was a short, stubbed, bow-legged fellow, with protruding goggle-eyes, and a red, rather crooked nose. And when he went on saying nothing but 'Eh! eh!' and kept advancing towards me step by step, I was suddenly seized with so curious a sensation of disgust that I hastily jumped to my feet, leaped over the fence, and, without looking round, ran across country until my fiddle in my pocket twanged again.

When at last I stopped to take breath, the orchard and the whole valley were out of sight and I was in a beautiful forest. But I took little note of it, for I was downright provoked at the peasant's impertinence, and I fumed for a long time, to myself. I walked on quickly, going farther and farther from the high-road and in among the mountains. The plank-roadway which I had been following ceased, and before me was only a narrow, unfrequented foot-path. Not a soul was to be seen anywhere, and no sound was to be heard. But it was very pleasant walking, the trees rustled and the birds sang sweetly. I resigned myself to the guidance of heaven, and, taking out my violin, played all my favourite airs. Very joyous they sounded in the lonely forest.

I grew tired of playing after a while, for I stumbled every minute over the tiresome roots of the trees, and I began to grow very hungry, while the wood seemed endless. Thus I wandered for the entire day, until the sun's rays came aslant through the trunks

of the trees, when at last I emerged on a little grassy vale shut in by the mountains and gay with red and yellow flowers, above which myriads of butterflies were fluttering in the golden light of the setting sun. It was as secluded here as though the world had been hundreds of miles away. The crickets chirped, and a shepherd lad lying among the tall grasses blew so melancholy an air upon his horn that it was enough to break one's heart. "Yes," thought I to myself, "who has as happy a lot as a lazy lout! Some of us, though, have to wander about among strangers, and be always on the go." As a lovely, clear stream separated me from him, I called to him to ask where the nearest village was. But he did not disturb himself to reply,—only stretched his head a little out of the grass, pointed with his horn to the opposite wood, and coolly resumed his piping.

I marched on briskly, for twilight was at hand. The birds, which had made a great clatter while the sun was disappearing on the horizon, suddenly fell silent, and I began to feel almost afraid, so solemn was the perpetual rustling of the lonely forest. At last I heard dogs barking in the distance. I walked more quickly, the forest grew less and less dense, and in a little while I saw through the last trees a beautiful village-green, where a crowd of children were frolicking, and capering around a huge linden in the centre. Opposite me was an inn, and at a table before it were seated some peasants playing cards and smoking. On one side a number of lads and lasses were gathered in a group, the girls with their arms rolled in their aprons, and all gossiping together in the cool of the evening.

I took very little time for consideration, but, drawing my fiddle from my pocket, I played a merry waltz as I came out from the forest. The girls were surprised, and the old folks laughed so that the woods re-echoed with their merriment. But when I reached the

linden, and, leaning my back against it, went on playing gay waltzes, a whisper went round among the groups of young people to the right and left; the lads laid aside their pipes, each put his arm around his lass's waist, and in the twinkling of an eye the young folk were all waltzing around me; the dogs barked, skirts and coat-tails fluttered, and the children stood around me in a circle gazing curiously into my face and at my briskly-moving fingers.

When the first waltz was ended, it was easy to see how good music loosens the limbs. The peasant lads, who had before been restlessly shuffling about on the benches, with their pipes in their mouths and

their legs stretched out stiffly in front of them, were positively transformed, and, with their gay handkerchiefs hanging from the button-holes of their coats, capered about with the lasses so that it was a pleasure to look at them. One of them, who evidently thought a deal of himself, fumbled in his waistcoat-pocket for a long while, that the others might see him, and finally brought out a little silver coin, which he tried to put into my hand. It irritated me, although I had not a stiver in my pocket. I told him to keep his pennies, I was playing only for joy, because I was glad to be among people once more. Soon afterwards, however, a pretty girl came up to me with a great tankard of wine. "Musicians are thirsty folk," she said, with a laugh that displayed her pearls of teeth gleaming so temptingly between her red lips that I should have liked to kiss her then and there. She put the tankard to her charming mouth, and her eyes sparkled at me over its rim; she then handed it to me; I drained it to the bottom, and played afresh, till all were spinning merrily about me once more.

By and by the old peasants finished their game, and the young people grew tired and separated, so that gradually all was quiet and deserted in front of the inn. The girl who had brought me the wine also walked towards the village, but she went very slowly, and looked around from time to time as if she had forgotten something. At last she stopped and seemed to search for it on the ground, but as she stooped I saw her glance towards me from under her arm. I had learned polite manners at the castle, so I sprang towards her and said, "Have you lost anything, my pretty ma'amselle?" She blushed crimson. "Ah, no," she said; "it was only a rose: will you have it?" I thanked her, and stuck the rose in my button-hole. She looked very kindly at me, and said, "You play beautifully." "Yes," I replied, "it is a gift from God." "Musicians are very rare in the

country about here," she began again, then stammered, and cast down her eyes. "You might earn a deal of money here. My father plays the fiddle a little, and likes to hear about foreign countries,—and my father is very rich." Then she laughed, and said, "If you only would not waggle your head so, when you play." "My dearest girl," I said, "do not blush so,—and as for the tremoloso motion of the head, we can't help it, great musicians all do it." "Oh, indeed!" rejoined the girl. She was about to say more, when a terrible racket arose in the inn; the front door was opened with a bang, and a tall, lean fellow was shot out of it like a ramrod, after which it was slammed to behind him.

At the first sound the girl ran off like a deer and vanished in the darkness. The man picked himself up and began to rave against the inn with such volubility that it was a wonder to hear him. "What!" he yelled, "I drunk? I not pay the chalk-marks on your smoky door? Rub them out! rub them out! Did I not shave you yesterday over a ladle, and cut you just under the nose so that you bit the ladle in two? Shaving takes off one mark; ladle, another mark; court-plaster on your nose, another. How many more of your dirty marks do you want to have paid? But all right,—all right. I'll let the whole village, the whole world go unshaved. Wear your beards, for all I care, till they are so long, that at the judgment-day the Almighty will not know whether you are Jews or Christians. Yes, hang yourselves with your beards, shaggy bears that you are!" Here he burst into tears and, in a maudlin, falsetto voice, sobbed out, "Am I to drink water like a wretched fish? Is that loving your neighbour? Am I not a man and a skilled surgeon? Ah, I am beside myself today; my heart is full of pity, and of love for my fellow-creatures." And then, finding that all was quiet in the house, he began to walk away. When he saw me, he came plunging towards me with out-

stretched arms. I thought the fellow was about to embrace me, and sprang aside, letting him stumble on in the darkness, where I heard him discoursing to himself for some time.

All sorts of fancies filled my brain. The girl who had given me the rose was young, pretty, and rich. I could make my fortune before one could turn round. And sheep and pigs, turkeys, and fat geese stuffed with apples—verily, I seemed to see the Porter strutting up to me: "Seize your luck, Receiver, seize your luck! 'Marry young, you're never wrong;' take home your bride, live in the country, and live well." Plunged in these philosophical reflections, I sat me down on a stone, for, since I had no money, I did not venture to knock at the inn. The moon shone brilliantly, the forests on the mountain-side murmured in the still night; now and then a dog barked in the village which lay farther down the valley, buried, as it were, beneath foliage and moonlight. I gazed up at the heavens, where a few clouds were sailing slowly and now and then a falling star shot down from the zenith. Thus this same moon, thought I, is shining down upon my father's mill and upon his Grace's castle. Everything there is quiet by this time, the Lady fair is asleep, and the fountains and leaves in the garden are whispering just as they used to whisper, all the same whether I am there, or here, or dead. And the world seemed to me so terribly big, and I so utterly alone in it, that I could have wept from the very depths of my heart.

While I was thus sitting there, suddenly I heard the sound of horses' hoofs in the forest. I held my breath and listened as the sound came nearer and nearer, until I could hear the horses snorting. Soon afterwards two horsemen appeared under the trees, but paused at the edge of the woods, and talked together in low, very eager tones, as I could see by the moving shadows which were thrown

across the bright village-green, and by their long dark arms pointing in various directions. How often at home, when my mother, now dead, had told me of savage forests and fierce robbers, had I privately longed to be a part of such a story! I was well paid now for my silly, rash longings. I reached up the linden-tree, beneath which I was sitting, as high as I could, unobserved, until I clasped the lowest branch, and then I swung myself up. But just as I had got my body half across the branch, and was about to drag my legs up after it, one of the horsemen trotted briskly across the green towards me. I shut my eyes tight amid the thick foliage, and did not stir. "Who is there?" a voice called directly under me. "Nobody!" I yelled in terror at being detected, although I could not but laugh to myself at the thought of how the rogues would look when they should turn my empty pockets inside out. "Aha!" said the robber, "whose are these legs, then, hanging down here?" There was no help for it. "They are," I replied, "only a couple of legs of a poor, lost musician." And I hastily let myself drop, for I was ashamed to hang there any longer like a broken fork.

The rider's horse shied when I dropped so suddenly from the tree. He patted the animal's neck, and said, laughing, "Well, we too are lost, so we are comrades; perhaps you can help us to find the road to B. You shall be no loser by it." I assured him that I knew nothing about the road to B., and said that I would ask in the inn, or would conduct them to the village. But the man would not listen to reason; he drew from his girdle a pistol, the barrel of which glittered in the moonlight. "My dear fellow," he said in a very friendly tone, as he wiped off the glittering barrel and then ran his eye along it,—"my dear fellow, you will have the kindness to go yourself before us to B."

Verily, I was in a scrape. If I chanced to hit the right road,

I should certainly get into the midst of the robber band and be beaten because I had no money; if I did not find the road, I should be beaten of course. I wasted very little thought upon the matter, but took the first road at hand, the one past the inn which led away from the village. The horseman galloped back to his companion, and both followed me slowly at some distance. Thus we wandered on foolishly enough at hap-hazard through the moonlit night. The road led through forests on the side of a mountain. Sometimes we could see, above the tops of the pines stirring darkly beneath us, far abroad into the deep, silent valleys; now and then a nightingale burst into song; the dogs bayed in the distant villages. A brook babbled ceaselessly from the depths below us, and here and there glistened in the moonlight. The hush was disturbed by the monotonous tramp of the horses and by the stir and movement of their riders, who talked together incessantly in a foreign tongue, and the bright moonlight contrasted sharply with the long shadows of the trees, which swept across the figures of the horsemen, making them appear now black, now light, now dwarfish, and anon gigantic. My thoughts grew strangely confused, as though in a dream from which I could not waken, but I marched straight ahead. We certainly must reach the end of the forest and of the night too, I thought.

At last long, rosy streaks flushed the horizon here and there but faintly, as when one breathes upon a mirror, and a lark began to sing high up above the peaceful valley. My heart at once grew perfectly light at the approach of dawn, and all fear left me. The two horsemen stretched themselves, looked around, and seemed for the first time to suspect that we might not have taken the right road. They chatted much, and I could perceive that they were talking of me; it even seemed to me that one of them began to mistrust me, as though I were a rogue trying to lead them astray in the forest.

This amused me mightily, for the lighter it grew the greater grew my courage, until we emerged upon a fine, spacious opening. Here I looked about me quite savagely, and whistled once or twice through my fingers, as scoundrels always do when they wish to signal one another.

"Halt!" exclaimed one of the horsemen, so suddenly that I jumped. When I looked round I saw that both had alighted and had tied their horses to a tree. One of them came up to me rapidly, stared me full in the face, and then burst into a fit of immoderate laughter. I must confess this senseless merriment irritated me. But he said, "Why, it is actually the gardener—I should say the Receiver, from the castle!"

I stared at him in turn, but could not remember who he was; indeed, I should have had enough to do to recognize all the young gentlemen who came and went at the castle. He kept up an eternal laughter, however, declaring, "This is magnificent! You're taking a holiday, I see; we are just in want of a servant; stay with us and you will have a perpetual holiday." I was dumfounded, and said at last that I was just on my way to visit Italy. "Italy?" the stranger rejoined. "That is just where we wish to go!" "Ah, if that be so!" I exclaimed, and, taking out my fiddle, I tuned up so that all the birds in the wood awaked. The young fellow immediately threw his arm around his companion, and they waltzed around the meadow like mad.

Suddenly they stood still. "By heavens," exclaimed one, "I can see the church-tower of B.! We shall soon be there." He took out his watch and made it repeat, then shook his head, and made the watch strike again. "No," he said, "it will not do; we should arrive too early, and that might be very bad."

Then they brought out from their saddle-bags cakes, cutlets, and

bottles of wine, spread a gay cloth on the grass, stretched themselves beside it, and feasted to their hearts' content, sharing all generously with me, which I greatly enjoyed, seeing that for some days I had not had over and above enough to eat. "And let me tell you," one of them said to me—"but you do not know us yet?" I shook my head. "Then let me tell you. I am the painter Lionardo, and my friend here is a painter also, called Guido."

I could see the two painters more clearly in the dawning morning. Herr Lionardo was tall, brown, and slender, with merry, ardent eyes. The other was much younger, smaller, and more delicate, dressed in antique German style, as the Porter called it, with a white collar and bare throat, about which hung dark brown curls, which he was often obliged to toss aside from his pretty face. When he had breakfasted, he picked up my fiddle, which I had laid on the grass beside me, seated himself upon the fallen trunk of a tree, and strummed the strings. Then he sang in a voice clear as a wood-robin's, so that it went to my very heart,—

"When the earliest morning ray
Through the valley finds its way,
Hill and forest fair awaking,
All who can their flight are taking.

"And the lad who's free from care
Shouts, with cap flung high in air,
'Song its flight can aye be winging;
Let me, then, be ever singing.'"

As he sang, the ruddy rays of morning exquisitely illumined his pale face and dark, love-lit eyes. But I was so tired that the words and notes of his song mingled and blended strangely in my ears, until at last I fell sound asleep.

When, by and by, I began gradually to awaken, I heard, as in a dream, the two painters talking together beside me, and the birds singing overhead, while the morning sun shining through my closed eyelids produced the sensation of looking towards the light through red curtains. "*Com' è bello!*" I heard some one exclaim close to me. I opened my eyes, and saw the younger painter bending over me in the clear morning light, so near that I seemed to see only his large black eyes between his drooping curls.

I sprang up hastily, for it was broad day. Herr Lionardo seemed cross,—he had two angry furrows on his brow,—and hastily made ready to move on. But the other painter shook his curls away from his face and quietly hummed an air to himself as he was bridling his steed, until at last Lionardo burst into a sudden fit of laughter, picked up a bottle standing on the grass, and poured the contents into a couple of glasses. "To our happy arrival!" he exclaimed, as the two clinked their glasses melodiously. Whereupon Lionardo tossed the empty bottle high in the air, and it sparkled brilliantly.

At last they mounted their horses, and I marched on beside them. Just at our feet lay a valley in measureless extent, into which our road descended. How clear and fresh and bright and jubilant were all the sights and sounds around! I was so cool, so happy, that I felt as if I could have flown from the mountain out into the glorious landscape.

CHAPTER IV.

FAREWELL, mill, and castle, and Porter! We went at such a pace that the wind nearly blew my hat off. Right and left, villages, towns, and vineyards flew past in a twinkling; behind me the two painters were seated in the carriage, before me were four horses and a gorgeous postilion, while I, seated high up on the box, bounced into the air from time to time.

It had happened thus: Arrived at B., while we were as yet in the outskirts a tall, thin, crusty gentleman in a green plush coat came to meet us, and, with many obeisances to the two painters, conducted us into the village, where, beneath the tall linden beside the post-station, stood a fine carriage with four post-horses. Herr Lionardo

meanwhile insisted that I had outgrown my clothes, and in a trice he produced another suit from his portmanteau, and I had to put on a beautiful new dress-coat and vest; very fine to see, but they were too long and too wide for me, and absolutely fluttered about me. And I also had a brand-new hat, which shone in the sunlight as if it had been smeared with fresh butter. Then the crusty stranger gentleman took the bridles of the two horses which the painters had been riding, the painters themselves got into the carriage, I mounted upon the box, and we started, just as the postmaster poked his head out of the window, in his nightcap. The postilion blew his horn merrily, and we were off for Italy.—

I led a magnificent existence up there, like a bird in the air, except that I did not need to fly. I had absolutely nothing to do but to sit on the box day and night, and bring out food and drink to the carriage from the inns, for the painters never alighted, and in the daytime they shut the carriage windows close, as if the sun would have killed them; only now and then Herr Guido put his pretty head out of the carriage window and chatted kindly with me, laughing the while at Herr Lionardo, who always seemed to dislike these talks. Once or twice I nearly fell into disgrace with my master,—the first time because on a clear starry night I began to play the fiddle up there on my box, and then because of my sleeping. It *was* strange! I longed to see all that I could of Italy, and opened my eyes wide every fifteen minutes. And yet, after I had gazed steadily about me for a while, the sixteen trotting feet before me would grow indistinct and dreamy, my eyes would gradually close, and at last I would fall into a slumber so profound and invincible that it was impossible to rouse me. Then day or night, rain or sunshine, Tyrol or Italy, it was all the same; I swayed first to the right, then to the left, then backwards,—nay, sometimes my head nodded

down so low that my hat dropped off, and Herr Guido screamed aloud.

Thus we had passed, I hardly know how, half through the part of Italy that they call Lombardy, when on a fine evening we stopped at a country inn. The post-horses were to be ready for us at the neighbouring station in a couple of hours, so the painters left the carriage, and were shown into a special apartment, to rest a little, and to write some letters. I was greatly pleased, and betook myself to the common room to eat and drink in comfort. Here everything looked rather disreputable: the maids were going about with their hair in disorder and their neckerchiefs awry, exposing their sallow skin; the men-servants were at their supper in blue smock-frocks, around a circular table, whence they glowered at me from time to time. They all wore their hair tied behind in a short, thick queue which looked quite dandified. "Here you are," I said to myself, as I ate my supper, "here you are in the country from which such queer people used to come to the Herr Pastor's with mouse-traps, and barometers, and pictures. How much a man learns who makes up his mind not to stick close to his own hearth-stone all his life!"

As I was thus eating my supper and meditating, a little man, who had been sitting in a dim corner of the room over a glass of wine, darted out of his nook at me like a spider. He was quite short and crooked, and he had a big ugly head, with a long hooked nose and sparse red whiskers, while his powdered hair stood on end all over his head as if a hurricane had swept over it. He wore an old-fashioned, threadbare dress-coat, short, plush breeches, and faded silk stockings. He had once been in Germany, and prided himself upon his knowledge of German. He sat down by me and asked a hundred questions, perpetually taking snuff the while,—was I the *servitore?* when did

we arriva? did we went to Roma? All this I myself did not know, and really I could not understand his gibberish. "*Parlez-vous francais?*" I asked him at last in my distress. He shook his big head, and I was very glad, for neither did I speak French. But it was of no use, he had taken me in hand, and went on asking question after question; the more we parleyed the less we understood each other, until at last we both grew angry, and I actually thought the Signor would have liked to peck me with his hooked beak, until the maids, who had been listening to our confusion of tongues, laughed heartily at us. I put down my knife and fork and went out of doors; for in this strange land I, with my German tongue, seemed to have sunk down fathoms deep into the sea, where all sorts of unfamiliar, crawling creatures were gliding about me, peopling the solitude and glaring and snapping at me.

Outside, the summer night was warm and inviting. From the distant vineyards a labourer's song now and then fell on the ear; there was lightning low on the horizon, and the landscape seemed to tremble and whisper in the moonlight. Sometimes I thought I perceived a tall, dim figure gliding behind the hazel hedge in front of the house and peeping through the twigs, and then all would be motionless. Suddenly Herr Guido appeared on the balcony above me. He did not see me, and began to play with great skill on a zither which he must have found in the house, singing to it like a nightingale:

"When the yearning heart is stilled
As in dreams, the forest sighing,
To the listening earth replying,
Tells the thoughts with which 'twas filled:
Days long vanished, soothing sorrow,—
From the Past a light they borrow,
And the heart is gently thrilled."

I do not know whether he sang any more, for I had stretched myself on a bench outside the door, and I fell asleep in the warm air from sheer exhaustion.

A couple of hours must have passed, when I was roused by the winding of a post-horn, which sounded merrily in my dreams for a while before I fully recovered consciousness. At last I sprang up; day was already dawning on the mountains, and I felt through all my limbs the freshness of the morning. Then it occurred to me that by this time we ought to be far on our way. "Aha!" I thought, "now it is my turn to laugh. How Herr Guido will shake his sleepy, curly head when he hears me outside!" So I went close beneath the window in the little garden at the back of the house, stretched my limbs well in the morning air, and sang merrily,—

"If the cricket's chirp we hear,
Then be sure the day is near;
When the sun is rising,—then
'Tis good to go to asleep again."

The window of the room where my masters were stood open, but all within was quiet; the breeze alone rustled the leaves of the vine that clambered into the window itself. "What does this mean?" I exclaimed in surprise, and ran into the house, and through the silent corridors, to the room. But when I opened the door my heart stood still with dismay; the room was perfectly empty; not a coat, not a hat, not a boot, anywhere. Only the zither upon which Herr Guido had played was hanging on the wall, and on the table in the centre of the room lay a purse full of money, with a card attached to it. I took it to the window, and could scarcely trust my eyes when I read, in large letters, 'For the Herr Receiver!'

But what good could it all do me if I could not find my dear,

merry masters again? I thrust the purse into my deep coat-pocket, where it plumped down as into a well and almost pulled me over backwards. Then I rushed out, and made a great noise, and waked up all the maids and men in the house. They could not imagine what was the matter, and thought I must have gone crazy. But they were not a little amazed when they saw the empty nest. No one knew anything of my masters. One maid only had observed —so far as I could make out from her signs and gesticulations—that Herr Guido, when he was singing on the balcony on the previous evening, had suddenly screamed aloud, and had then rushed back into the room to the other gentleman. And once, when she waked in the night afterwards, she had heard the tramp of a horse. She peeped out of the little window of her room, and saw the crooked Signor, who had talked so much to me, on a white horse, galloping so furiously across the field in the moonlight that he bounced high up from his saddle; and the maid crossed herself, for he looked like a ghost riding upon a three-legged horse. I did not know what in the world to do.

Meanwhile, however, our carriage was standing before the door ready to start, and the impatient postilion blew his horn fit to burst, for he had to be at the next station at a certain hour, because everything had been ordered with great exactitude in the way of changing horses. I ran once more through all the house, calling the painters, but no one made answer; the inn-people stared at me, the postilion cursed, the horses neighed, and at last, completely dazed, I sprang into the carriage, the hostler shut the door behind me, the postilion cracked his whip, and away I went into the wide world.

CHAPTER V.

We drove on now over hill and dale, day and night. I had no time for reflection, for wherever we arrived the horses were standing ready harnessed. I could not talk with the people, and my signs and gestures were of no use; often just in the midst of a fine dinner the postilion wound his horn, and I had to drop knife and fork and spring into the carriage again without knowing whither I was going, or why or wherefore I was obliged to hurry on at such a rattling pace.

Otherwise the life was not unpleasant. I reclined upon the soft cushions first in one corner of the carriage and then in the other, and took note of countries and people, and when we drove through the villages I leaned both arms on the window of the carriage, and acknowledged the courtesy of the men who took off their hats to me, or else I kissed my hand like an old acquaintance to the young girls at the windows, who looked surprised, and stared after me as long as the carriage was in sight.

But a day came when I was in a terrible fright. I had never counted the money in the purse left for me, and I had to pay a great

deal to the postmasters and innkeepers everywhere, so that before I was aware, the purse was empty. When I first discovered this I had an idea of jumping out of the carriage and making my escape, the next time we drove through a lonely wood. But I could not make up my mind to give up the beautiful carriage and leave it all alone, when if it were possible I would gladly have driven in it to the end of the world.

So I sat buried in thought, not knowing what to do, when all at once we turned aside from the highway. I shouted to the postilion to ask him where he was going, but, shout as I would, the fellow never made any answer save "*Si, si, Signore!*" and on he drove over stock and stone till I was jolted from side to side in the carriage.

I was not at all pleased, for the high-road ran through a charming country, directly towards the setting sun, which was bathing the landscape in a sea of splendour, while before us, when we turned aside, lay a dreary hilly region, broken by ravines, where in the gray depths darkness had already set in. The further we drove, the lonelier and drearier grew the road. At last the moon emerged from the clouds, and shone through the trees with a weird, unearthly brilliancy. We had to go very slowly in the narrow rocky ravines, and the continuous, monotonous rattle of the carriage re-echoed from the walls on either side, as if we were driving through a vaulted tomb. From the depths of the forest came a ceaseless murmur of unseen water-falls, and the owlets hooted in the distance 'Come too! come too!' As I looked at the driver, I noticed for the first time that he wore no uniform and was not a postilion; he seemed to be growing restless; turning his head and looking behind him several times. Then he began to drive quicker, and as I leaned out of the carriage a horseman came out of the shrubbery on one side of the road, crossed it at a bound directly in front of our horses, and vanished in the forest on

the other side. I felt bewildered; as far as I could see in the bright moonlight the rider was that very same crooked little man who had so pecked at me with his hooked nose in the inn, and mounted, too, on the same white horse. The driver shook his head and laughed aloud at such horsemanship, then quickly turned to me and said a great deal very eagerly, not a word of which did I understand, and then he drove on more rapidly than ever.

I was rejoiced soon afterwards when I perceived a light glimmering in the distance. Gradually more and more lights appeared, and at last we passed several smoke-dried huts clinging like swallows' nests to the rocks. As the night was warm, the doors stood open, and I could see into the lighted rooms, and all sorts of ragged figures gathered about the hearths. We rattled on through the quiet night, along a steep, stony road leading up a high mountain. Soon lofty trees and hanging vines arched completely over us, and anon the heavens became visible, and we could overlook in the depths a distant circle of mountains, forests, and valleys. On the summit of the mountain stood a grand old castle, its many towers gleaming in the brilliant moonlight. "God be thanked!" I exclaimed, greatly relieved, and on the tiptoe of expectation as to whither I was being conducted.

A good half-hour passed, however, before we reached the gate-way of the castle. It led under a broad round tower, the summit of which was half ruined. The driver cracked his whip three times, so that the old castle re-echoed, and a flock of startled rooks flew forth from every sheltered nook and careered wildly overhead with hoarse caws. Then the carriage rolled on through the long, dark gate-way. The iron shoes of the horses struck fire upon the stone pavement, a large dog barked, the wheels thundered along the vaulted passage, the rooks' hoarse cries resounded, and amidst all this horrible hubbub we reached a small, paved court-yard.

"A queer post-station this," I thought, when the coach stopped. The coach door was opened, and a tall old man with a small lantern scanned me grimly from beneath his bushy eyebrows. He then took my arm and helped me to alight from the coach as if I had been a person of quality. Outside, before the castle door, stood a very ugly old woman in a black camisole and petticoat, with a white apron and a black cap, the long point of which in front almost touched her nose. A large bunch of keys hung on one side of her waist, and she held in her hand an old-fashioned candelabrum with two lighted wax candles. As soon as she saw me she began to duck and courtesy and to talk volubly. I did not understand a word, but I scraped innumerable bows, and felt very uncomfortable.

Meanwhile, the old man had peered into every corner of the coach with his lantern, and grumbled and shook his head upon finding no trace of trunk or luggage. The driver, without asking for the usual *pour-boire*, proceeded to put up the coach in an old shed on one side of the court-yard, while the old woman by all sorts of courteous signs invited me to follow her. She showed the way with her wax candles through a long, narrow passage, and up a little stone staircase. As we passed the kitchen a couple of maids poked their heads inquisitively through the half-open door, and stared at me, as they winked and nodded furtively to each other, as if they had never in all their lives seen a man before. At last the old woman opened a door, and for a moment I was quite dazed; the apartment was spacious and very handsome, the ceiling decorated with gilded carving and the walls hung with magnificent tapestry portraying all sorts of figures and flowers. In the centre of the room stood a table spread with cutlets, cakes, salad, fruit, wine, and confections, enough to make one's mouth water. Between the windows hung a tall mirror, reaching from the floor to the ceiling.

I must say that all this delighted me. I stretched myself once or twice, and paced the room to and fro with much dignity, after which I could not resist looking at myself in such a large mirror. Of a truth Herr Lionardo's new clothes became me well, and I had caught an ardent expression of eye from the Italians, but otherwise I was just such a whey-face as I had been at home, with only a soft down on my upper lip.

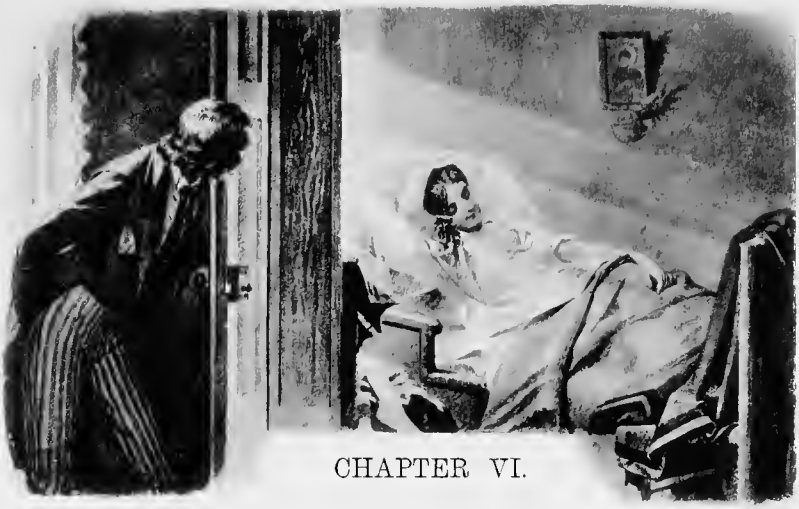
Meanwhile, the old woman ground away with her toothless jaws, as if she were actually chewing the end of her long nose. She made

me sit down, chucked me under the chin with her lean fingers, called me '*poverino,*' and leered at me so roguishly with her red eyes that one corner of her mouth twitched half-way up her cheek as she at last left the room with a low courtesy.

I sat down at the table, and a young, pretty girl came in to wait on me. I made all sorts of gallant speeches to her, which she did not understand, but watched me curiously while I applied myself to the viands with evident enjoyment; they were delicious. When I had finished and rose from table, she took a candle and conducted me to another room, where were a sofa, a small mirror, and a magnificent bed with green silk curtains. I inquired by signs whether I were to sleep there. She nodded assent, but I could not undress while she stood beside me as if she were rooted to the spot. At last I went and got a large glass of wine from the table in the next room, drank it off,

and wished her "*Felicissima notte!*" for I had managed to learn that much Italian. But while I was emptying the glass at a draught she suddenly burst into a fit of suppressed giggling, grew very red, and went into the next room, closing the door behind her. "What is there to laugh at?" thought I in a puzzle. "I believe Italians are all crazy."

Still in anxiety lest the postilion should begin to blow his horn again, I listened at the window, but all was quiet outside. "Let him blow!" I thought, undressed myself, and got into the magnificent bed, where I seemed to be fairly swimming in milk and honey! The old linden in the court-yard rustled, a rook now and then flew off the roof, and at last, completely happy, I fell asleep.



CHAPTER VI.

When I awoke, the beams of early morning were shining on the green curtains of my bed. At first I could not remember where I was. I seemed to be still driving in the coach, where I had been dreaming of a castle in the moonlight, and of an old witch and her pale daughter.

I sprang hastily out of bed, dressed myself, and, looking about my room, perceived in the wainscoting a small door, which I had not seen the night before. It was ajar; I opened it, and saw a pretty little room looking very fresh and neat in the early dawn. Some articles of feminine apparel were lying in disorder over the back of a chair, and in a bed beside it lay the girl who had waited upon me the evening before. She was sleeping soundly, her head resting upon her bare white arm, over which her black curls were straying. "How mortified she would be if she knew that the door was open!" I said to myself, and I crept back into my room, bolting the door after me, that the girl might not be horrified and ashamed when she awoke.

Not a sound was yet to be heard outside, except from an early robin that was singing his morning song, perched upon a spray growing out of the wall beneath my window. "No," said I, "you shall not shame me by singing all alone your early hymn of praise to God!" I hastily fetched my fiddle, which I had laid upon the table the night before, and left the room. Everything in the castle was silent as death, and I was a long while finding my way through the dim corridors out into the open air.

There I found myself in a large garden extending half-way down the mountain, its broad terraces lying one beneath the other like huge steps. But the gardening was slovenly. The paths were all grass-grown, the yew figures were not trimmed, but stretched long noses and caps a yard high into the air like ghosts, so that really they must have been quite fearsome at nightfall. Linen was hanging to dry on the broken marble statues of an unused fountain; here and there in the middle of the garden cabbages were planted beside some common flowers; everything was neglected, in disorder, and overgrown with tall weeds, among which glided varicoloured lizards. On all sides through the gigantic old trees there was a distant, lonely prospect of range after range of mountains stretching as far as the eye could reach.

After I had been sauntering about through this wilderness for a while in the dawn, I descried upon the terrace below me, striding to and fro with folded arms, a tall, slender, pale youth in a long brown surtout. He seemed not to perceive me, and shortly seated himself upon a stone bench, took a book out of his pocket, read very loud from it, as if he were preaching, looked up to heaven at intervals, and leaned his head sadly upon his right hand. I looked at him for a long time, but at last I grew curious to know why he was making such extraordinary gestures, and I went hastily towards him. He had

just heaved a profound sigh, and sprang up startled as I approached. He was completely confused, and so was I; we neither of us knew what to say, and we stood there bowing, until he made his escape, striding rapidly through the shrubbery. Meanwhile, the sun had arisen over the forest; I mounted on the stone bench, and scraped my fiddle merrily, so that the quiet valleys re-echoed. The old woman with the bunch of keys, who had been searching anxiously for me all through the castle to call me to breakfast, appeared upon the terrace above me, and was surprised that I could play the fiddle so well. The grim old man from the castle came too, and was as much amazed, and at last the maids came, and they all stood up there together agape, while I fingered away, and wielded my bow in the most artistic manner, playing cadenzas and variations until I was downright tired.

The castle was a mighty strange place! No one dreamed of journeying further. It was no inn or post-station, as I learned from one of the maids, but belonged to a wealthy count. When I sometimes questioned the old woman as to the count's name and where he lived, she only smirked as she had done on the evening of my arrival, and slyly pinched me and winked at me archly as if she were out of her senses. If on a warm day I drank a whole bottle of wine, the maids were sure to giggle when they brought me another; and once when I wanted to smoke a pipe, and informed them by signs of my desire, they all burst into a fit of foolish laughter. But most mysterious of all was a serenade which often, and always upon the darkest nights, sounded beneath my window. A guitar was played fitfully; soft, low chords being heard from time to time. Once I imagined I heard some one down below call up, "Pst! pst!" I sprang out of bed and, putting my head out of the window, called, "Holla! who's there?" But no answer came; I only heard the

rustling of the shrubbery, as if some one were hastily running away. The large dog in the court-yard, roused by my shout, barked a couple of times, and then all was still again. After this the serenade was heard no more.

Otherwise my life here was all that mortal could desire. The worthy Porter knew well what he was talking about when he was wont to declare that in Italy raisins dropped into one's mouth of themselves. I lived in the lonely castle like an enchanted Prince. Wherever I went the servants treated me with the greatest respect, though they all knew that I had not a farthing in my pocket. I had but to say, "Table, be spread," and lo, I was served with delicious viands, rice, wine, melons, and Parmesan cheese. I lived on the best, slept in the magnificent canopied bed, walked in the garden, played my fiddle, and sometimes helped with the gardening. I often lay for hours in the tall grass, and the pale youth in his long surtout—he was a student and a relative of the old woman's, and was spending his vacation here—would pace around me in a wide circle, muttering from his book like a conjurer, which was always sure to send me to sleep. Thus day after day passed, until, what with the good eating and drinking, I began to grow quite melancholy. My limbs became limp from perpetually doing nothing, and I felt as if I should fall to pieces from sheer laziness.

One sultry afternoon, I was sitting in the boughs of a tall tree that overhung the valley, gently rocking myself above its quiet depths. The bees were humming among the leaves around me; all else was silent as the grave; not a human being was to be seen on the mountains, and below me on the peaceful meadows the cows were resting in the high grass. But from far away the note of a post-horn floated across the wooded heights, at first scarcely audible, then clearer and more distinct. On the instant my heart re-echoed an old

song which I had learned when at home at my father's mill from a travelling journeyman, and I sang,—

"Whenever abroad you are straying,
Take with you your dearest one:
While others are laughing and playing,
A stranger is left all alone.

"And what know these trees, with their sighing,
Of an older, a lovelier day?
Alas, o'er yon blue mountains lying,
Thy home is so far, far away!

"The stars in their courses I treasure,
My pathway to her they shone o'er;
The nightingale's song gives me pleasure,
It sang nigh my dearest one's door.

"When starlight and dawn are contending,
I climb to the mountain-tops clear;
Thence gazing, my greeting I'm sending
To Germany, ever most dear."

It seemed as if the post-horn in the distance would fain accompany my song. While I was singing, it came nearer and nearer among the mountains, until at last I heard it in the castle court-yard. I got down from the tree as quickly as possible, in time to meet the old woman with an opened packet coming towards me. "Here is something too for you," she said, and handed me a neat little note. It was without address; I opened it hastily, and on the instant flushed as red as a peony, and my heart beat so violently that the old woman observed my agitation. The note was from—my Lady fair, whose handwriting I had often seen at the bailiff's. It was

short: "All is well once more; all obstacles are removed. I take a private opportunity to be the first to write you the good news. Come, hasten back. It is so lonely here, and I can scarcely bear to live since you left us. Aurelia."

As I read, my eyes grew dim with rapture, alarm, and ineffable delight. I was ashamed in presence of the old woman, who began to smirk and wink odiously, and I flew like an arrow to the loneliest nook of the garden. There I threw myself on the grass beneath the hazel-bushes and read the note again, repeating the words by heart, and then re-reading them over and over, while the sunlight danced between the leaves upon the letters, so that they were blended and blurred before my eyes like golden and bright-green and crimson blossoms. "Is she not married, then?" I thought; "was that young officer her brother, perhaps, or is he dead, or am I crazy, or——? but no matter!" I exclaimed at last, leaping to my feet. "It is clear enough, she loves me! she loves me!"

When I crept out of the shrubbery the sun was near its setting. The heavens were red, the birds were singing merrily in the woods, the valleys were full of a golden sheen, but in my heart all was a thousand times more beautiful and more glad.

I shouted to them in the castle to serve my supper out in the garden. The old woman, the grim old man, the maids,—I made them all come and sit at table with me under the trees. I brought out my fiddle and played, and ate and drank between-whiles. Then they all grew merry; the old man smoothed the grim wrinkles out of his face, and emptied glass after glass, the old woman chattered away,—heaven knows about what,—the maids began to dance together on the green-sward. At last the pale student approached inquisitively, cast a scornful glance at the party, and was about to pass on with great dignity. But I sprang up in a twinkling, and, before he knew what I was

about, seized him by his long surtout and waltzed merrily round with him. He actually began to try to dance after the latest and most approved fashion, and footed it so nimbly that the moisture stood in beads upon his forehead, his long coat flew round like a wheel, and he looked at me so strangely withal, and his eyes rolled so, that I began to be really afraid of him, and suddenly released him.

The old woman was very curious to know the contents of the note, and why I was so very merry of a sudden. But the matter was far too intricate for me to be able to explain it to her. I merely pointed to a couple of storks that were sailing through the air far above our heads, and said that so must I go, far, far away. At this she opened her bleared eyes wide, and cast a sinister glance first at me and then at the old man. After that, I noticed as often as I turned away that they put their heads together and talked eagerly, glancing askance towards me from time to time.

This puzzled me. I pondered upon what scheme they could be hatching, and I grew more quiet. The sun had long set, so I wished them all good-night and betook myself thoughtfully to my bedroom.

I felt so happy and so restless that for a long while I paced the apartment to and fro. Outside, the wind was driving black, heavy clouds high above the castle-tower; the nearest mountain-summit could be scarcely discerned in the thick darkness. Then I thought I heard voices in the garden below. I put out my candle and sat down at the window. The voices seemed to come nearer, speaking in low tones, and suddenly a long ray of light shot from a small lantern concealed under the cloak of a dark figure. I instantly recognized the grim old steward and the old housekeeper. The light flashed in the face of the old woman, who looked to me more hideous than ever, and upon the blade of a long knife which she held in her hand.

I could plainly see that both of them were looking up at my window. Then the steward folded his cloak more closely, and all was dark and silent.

"What do they want," I thought, "out in the garden, at this hour?" I shuddered; I could not help recalling all the stories of murders that I had ever heard,—all the tales of witches and robbers who slaughtered people that they might devour their hearts. Whilst I was filled with such thoughts, I heard footsteps coming up the stairs softly, then very softly along the narrow passage directly to my door; and at the same time I thought I heard voices whispering together. I ran hastily to the other end of the room and behind a large table, which I could lift and bang against the door as soon as anything stirred outside. But in the darkness I upset a chair, which made a tremendous crash. In an instant all was profound silence outside. I listened behind the table, staring at the door as if I could pierce it with my eyes, which felt as if they were starting from my head. When I had kept so quiet for a while that the buzzing of a fly could have been plainly heard, I distinguished the sound of a key softly put into the keyhole of my door on the outside. I was just about to make a demonstration with my table, when the key was turned slowly three times round in the lock, and then cautiously withdrawn, after which the footsteps retreated along the passage and down the staircase.

I took a long breath. "Oho," I thought, "they have locked me up that all may be easy when I am sound asleep." I tried the door, and found it locked, as was also the other door, behind which the pale maid slept. This had never been so before since I had been at the castle.

Here was I imprisoned in a foreign land! The Lady fair undoubtedly was even now standing at her window and looking across

the quiet garden towards the high-road, to see if I were not coming from the toll-house with my fiddle. The clouds were scudding across the sky; time was passing,—and I could not get away. Ah, but my heart was sore; I did not know what to do. And if the leaves rustled outside, or a rat gnawed behind the wainscot, I fancied I saw the old woman gliding in by a secret door and creeping softly through the room, with that long knife in hand.

As, given over to such fancies, I sat on the side of my bed, I heard, the first time for a long while, the music beneath my window. At the first twang of the guitar a ray of light darted into my soul. I opened the window, and called down softly, that I was awake. "Pst, pst!" was the answer from below. Without more ado, I thrust the note into my pocket, took my fiddle, got out of the window, and scrambled down the ruinous old wall, clinging to the vines growing from the crevices. One or two crumbling stones gave way, and I began to slide faster and faster, until at last I came down upon my feet with such a sudden bump that my teeth rattled in my head.

Scarcely had I thus reached the garden when I felt myself embraced with such violence that I screamed aloud. My kind friend, however, clapped his hand on my mouth, and, taking my arm, led me through the shrubbery to the open lawn. Here, to my astonishment, I recognized the tall student, who had a guitar slung around his neck by a broad silk ribbon. I explained to him as quickly as possible that I wished to escape from the garden. He seemed perfectly aware of my wishes, and conducted me by various covert pathways to the lower door in the high garden wall. But when we reached it, it was fast locked! The student, however, seemed to be quite prepared for this; he produced a large key and cautiously unlocked it.

When we found ourselves in the forest, and I was about to inquire of him the best road to the nearest town, he suddenly fell upon one knee before me, raised a hand aloft, and began to curse and to swear in the most horrible manner. I could not imagine what he wanted; I could hear frequent repetitions of '*Iddio*' and '*cuore*' and '*amore*' and '*furore!*' But when he began hobbling close up to me on both knees, I grew positively terrified, I perceived clearly that he had lost his wits, and I fled into the depths of the forest without looking back.

I heard the student behind me shouting like one possessed, and soon afterwards a rough voice from the castle shouting in reply.

I was sure they would pursue me. The road was entirely unknown to me; the night was dark; I should probably fall into their hands. Therefore I climbed up into a tall tree to await my opportunity to escape.

From here I could distinguish one voice after another calling in the castle. Several links appeared in the garden, and cast a weird lurid light over the old walls and down the mountain out into the black night. I commended my soul to the Almighty, for the confused uproar grew louder and nearer. At last the student, bearing aloft a torch, ran past my tree below me so fast that the skirt of his surtout flew out behind him in the wind. After this the tumult gradually retreated to the other side of the mountain; the voices sounded more and more distant, and at last the wind alone sighed through the silent forest. I then descended from my tree and ran breathless down into the valley and out into the night.

CHAPTER VII.

I HURRIED on for the rest of the night and the next day, for there was a din in my ears for a long time, as if all the people from the castle were after me, shouting, waving torches, and brandishing long knives. On the way I learned that I was only five or six miles from Rome, whereat I could have jumped for joy. As a child at home I had heard wonderful stories of gorgeous Rome, and as I lay on my back in the grass on Sunday afternoons near the mill, and everything around was so quiet, I used to picture Rome out of the clouds sailing above me, with wondrous mountains and abysses, around the blue sea, with golden gates and lofty gleaming towers, where angels in shining robes were singing.

The night had come again, and the moon shone brilliantly, when at

last I emerged from the forest upon a hill-top, and saw the city lying before me in the distance. The sea gleamed afar off, the heavens glittered with innumerable stars, and beneath them lay the Holy City, a long strip of mist, like a slumbering lion on the quiet earth, watched and guarded by mountains around like shadowy giants.

I soon reached an extensive, lonely heath, where all was gray and silent as the grave. Here and there a ruined wall was still standing, or some strangely-gnarled trunk of a tree; now and then night-birds whirred through the air, and my own shadow glided long and black in the solitude beside me. They say that a primeval city lies buried here, and that Frau Venus makes it her abode, and that sometimes the old pagans rise up from their graves and wander about the heath and mislead travellers. I cared nothing, however, for such tales, but walked on steadily, for the city arose before me more and more distinct and magnificent, and the high castles and gates and golden domes gleamed wondrously in the moonlight, as if angels in golden garments were actually standing on the roofs and singing in the quiet night.

At last I passed some humble houses, and then through a gorgeous gate-way into the famous city of Rome. The moon shone bright as day among the palaces, but the streets were empty, except for some lazy fellow lying dead asleep on a marble step in the warm night air. The fountains plashed in the silent squares, and from the gardens bordering the street the trees added their murmur, and filled the air with refreshing fragrance.

As I was sauntering on, not knowing—what with delight, moonlight, and fragrance—which way to turn, I heard a guitar touched in the depths of a garden. "Great heavens!" I thought, "the crazy student with his long surtout has been secretly following me all this time." But in a moment a lady in the garden began to sing deliciously.

I stood spellbound; it was the voice of the Lady fair! and the self-same Italian song which she often used to sing at her open window!

Then the dear old time recurred so vividly to my mind that I could have wept bitterly; I saw the quiet garden before the castle in the early dawn, and thought how happy I had been among the shrubbery before that stupid fly flew up my nose. I could restrain myself no longer, but clambered over the gilded ornaments surmounting the grated gate-way and leaped down into the garden whence the song proceeded. As I did so I perceived a slender white figure standing in the distance behind a poplar-tree, looking at me in amazement; but in an instant it had turned and fled through the dim garden towards the house so quickly that in the moonlight it seemed to glide. "It was she, herself!" I exclaimed, and my heart throbbed with delight; I recognized her on the instant by her pretty little fleet feet. It was unfortunate that in clambering over the gate I had slightly twisted my ankle, and had to limp along for a minute or two before I could run after her towards the house. In the mean while the doors and windows had been closed. I knocked modestly, listened, and then knocked again. I seemed to hear low laughter and whispering within the house, and once I was almost sure that a pair of bright eyes peeped between the jalousies in the moonlight. But finally all was silent.

"She does not know that it is I," I thought; I took out my fiddle, and promenaded to and fro on the path before the house and sang the song of the Lady fair and played over all my songs that I had been wont to play on lovely summer nights in the castle garden, or on the bench before the toll-house so that the sound should reach the castle windows. But it was all of no use; no one stirred in the entire house. Then I put away my fiddle sadly, and seated myself upon the door-step, for I was very weary with my long march. The

night was warm; the flower-beds before the house sent forth a delicious fragrance, and a fountain somewhere in the depths of the garden plashed continuously. I thought dreamily of azure flowers, of dim, green, lovely, lonely spots where brooks were rippling and gay birds singing, until at last I fell sound asleep.

When I awoke the fresh air of morning was playing over me; the birds were already awake and twittering in the trees around, as if they were making game of me. I started up and looked about; the fountain in the garden was still playing, but nothing was to be heard within the house. I peeped through the green blinds into one of the rooms, where I could see a sofa and a large round table covered with gray linen. The chairs were all standing against the wall in perfect order; the blinds were down at all the windows, as if the house had been uninhabited for years. On a sudden downright horror of the lonely house and garden and of the white figure of the preceding night possessed me, and I ran, without once turning to look back, through the silent paths and avenues until I reached the garden gate and clambered up. But there I paused in an ecstasy of delight, when from the top of the high gate-way I saw the magnificent city below me. The morning sun was glittering on the roofs and in the streets, and I shouted for joy as I sprang from my post of observation.

Whither should I turn in the great, foreign city? The strange night I had passed, and the Lady fair's Italian song which I had heard, confused me still. At last I sat down on the edge of the stone basin of a fountain in the centre of a lonely Square, and sang, as I bathed my face and eyes in the clear, fresh water,—

"Were I but a little bird,
I know full well what I'd be singing.
Had I but two little wings,
I know what flight I'd fain be winging."

"Ah, my merry fellow, you sing like a lark in the dawn!" A young man who had approached the fountain during my song suddenly addressed me thus. When I heard my German tongue so unexpectedly it was as if the Sunday-morning bells of my native village were all at once echoing in my ears. "God bless you, my dear fellow-countryman!" I exclaimed, starting up from the fountain. The young man smiled, and scanned me from head to foot. "What are you doing here in Rome?" he asked at last. I really did not know what answer to make, for I could not tell him that I was in pursuit of the lovely Lady fair. "I am sauntering about," I replied, "to see a little of the world." "Indeed?" rejoined the young man. "'Tis a mighty fine calling. I am doing the same thing, and painting a little between-whiles." "What! a painter!" I exclaimed joyfully, for I thought of Herr Lionardo and Herr Guido. But before I got any further the young man interposed: "Come and breakfast with me, and I'll paint your portrait so that it will delight you." I readily consented, and walked along with the painter through the empty streets, where a few window-shutters were being opened, and where here and there a pair of white arms or a pretty, sleepy face peeped forth into the fresh morning air.

The young man conducted me hither and thither through a labyrinth of dark, narrow streets until at last we reached an old smoke-dried house. Here we ascended first one dark staircase, and then another, until we seemed to be aspiring to the skies. We stopped before a door under the roof, and the painter began to search his pockets in a great hurry. But he had forgotten to lock his door when he left the room, and the key was inside, for, as he had informed me as we walked, he had been out since daybreak to watch the effects of sunrise. He only shook his head, and pushed the door open with his foot.

We entered a very long and large apartment, spacious enough to dance in if the floor had not been so littered up. But there lay books, papers, clothes, overturned paint-pots, all huddled together; in the middle of the room were some large frames like those used for picking pears, and pictures were leaning against the walls. On a long wooden table was a plate, upon which were some bread and butter and a paint-brush, with a bottle of wine.

"Now, first of all, let us eat and drink, fellow-countryman," said the painter. I would gladly have spread myself a slice of bread and butter, but there was no knife. We rummaged for a long time among the papers on the table, and found a knife at last under a sketch-book. The painter opened the window, so that the fresh morning breeze swept through the room, and we could enjoy the glorious prospect of the city and of the surrounding hills where the morning sun glittered upon the white villas and the green vineyards. "All hail to our cool, green Germany behind the mountains there!" said the painter, taking a drink from the wine-flask, which he then handed to me. I politely followed his example, with many a loving thought of my fair, distant home.

Meanwhile, the painter had arranged near the window one of the frames upon which a large piece of paper was stretched. An old hovel was cleverly drawn in charcoal upon the paper, and within it sat the Blessed Virgin with a lovely, happy face, upon which there was withal a shade of melancholy. At her feet in a little nest of straw lay the Infant Jesus,—very lovely, with large serious eyes. Without, upon the threshold of the open door were kneeling two shepherd lads with staff and wallet. "You see," said the painter, "I am going to put your head upon one of these shepherds, and so people will know your face and, please God, take pleasure in it long after we are both under the sod, and are ourselves kneeling happily

before the Blessed Mother and her Son like those shepherd lads." Then he seized an old chair, the back of which came off in his hand as he lifted it. He soon fitted it into its place again, however, pushed it in front of the frame, and I had to sit down on it, and turn my face sideways to him. I sat thus for some minutes perfectly still, without stirring. After a while, however,—I am sure I do not know why,—I felt that I could endure it no longer, every part of me began to twitch, and besides, there hung directly in front of me a piece of broken looking-glass, into which I could not help glancing perpetually, making all sorts of grimaces from sheer weariness. The painter, noticing this, burst into a laugh, and waved his hand to signify that I might leave my chair. My face upon the paper was already finished, and was so exactly like me that I was immensely pleased with it.

The young man went on painting in the cool morning, singing as he worked, and sometimes looking from the open window at the glorious landscape. I, in the mean time, spread myself another piece of bread and butter, and walked up and down the room, looking at the pictures leaning against the wall. Two of them pleased me especially. "Did you paint these, too?" I asked the painter. "Not exactly," he replied. "They are by the famous masters Lionardo da Vinci and Guido Reni; but you know nothing about them." I was nettled by the conclusion of his remark. "Oh," I rejoined very composedly, "I know those two masters as well as I know myself." He opened his eyes at this. "How so?" he asked hastily. "Well," said I, "I travelled with them day and night, on horseback, on foot, and driving at a pace that made the wind whistle in my ears, and I lost them both at an inn, and then travelled post alone in their coach, which went bumping on two wheels over the rocks, and——" "Oho! oho!" the painter interrupted me, staring at me as if he


Terre

thought me mad. Then he suddenly burst into a fit of laughter. "Ah," he cried, "now I begin to understand. You travelled with two painters called Guido and Lionardo?" When I assented, he sprang up and looked me all over from head to foot. "I verily believe," he said, "that actually—— Can you play the violin?" I struck the pocket of my coat so that my fiddle gave forth a tone, and the painter went on: "There was a Countess here lately from Germany, who made inquiries in every nook and corner of Rome for those two painters and a young musician with a fiddle." "A young Countess from Germany?" I cried in an ecstasy. "Was the Porter with her? "Ah, that I do not know," replied the painter. "I saw her only once or twice at the house of one of her friends, who does not live in the city. Do you know this face?" he went on, suddenly lifting the covering from a large picture standing in a corner. In an instant I felt as we do when in a dark room the shutters are opened and the rising sun flashes in our eyes. It was—the lovely Lady fair! She was standing in the garden, in a black velvet gown, lifting her veil from her face with one hand, and looking abroad over a distant and beautiful landscape. The longer I looked the more vividly did it seem to be the castle garden, and the flowers and boughs waved in the wind, while in the depths of green I could see my little toll-house, and the high-road, and the Danube, and in the distance the blue mountains.

"'Tis she! 'tis she!" I exclaimed at last, and, seizing my hat, I ran out of the door and down the long staircases, while the astonished painter called after me to come back towards evening, and we might perhaps learn something more.

CHAPTER VIII.

I RAN in a great hurry through the city to present myself immediately at the house, in the garden of which the Lady fair had been singing yesterday evening. The streets were full of people; gentlemen and ladies were enjoying the sunshine and exchanging greetings, elegant coaches rolled past, and the bells in all the towers were summoning to mass, making wondrous melody in the air above the heads of the swarming crowd. I was intoxicated with delight, and with the hubbub, and ran on in my joy until at last I had no idea where I was. It was like enchantment; the quiet Square with the fountain, and the garden and the house, seemed the fabric of a dream, which had vanished in the clear light of day.

I could not make any inquiries, for I did not know the name of the Square. At last it began to be very sultry; the sun's rays darted down upon the pavement like burning arrows, people crept into their houses, the blinds everywhere were closed, and the street became once more silent and dead. I threw myself down in despair in front of a fine, large house with a balcony

resting upon pillars and affording a deep shade, and surveyed, first the quiet city, which looked absolutely weird in its sudden noonday solitude, and anon the deep blue, perfectly cloudless sky, until, tired out, I fell asleep. I dreamed that I was lying in a lonely green meadow near my native village; a warm summer rain was falling and glittering in the sun, which was just setting behind the mountains, and wherever the rain-drops fell upon the grass they turned into beautiful, bright flowers, so that I was soon covered with them.

What was my astonishment when I awoke to find a quantity of beautiful, fresh flowers lying upon me and beside me! I sprang up, but could see nothing unusual, except that in the house above me there was a window filled with fragrant shrubs and flowers, behind which a parrot talked and screamed incessantly. I picked up the scattered flowers, tied them together, and stuck the nosegay in my button-hole. Then I began to discourse with the parrot; it amused me to see him get up and down in his gilded cage with all sorts of odd twists and turns of his head, and always stepping awkwardly over his own toes. But before I was aware of it he was scolding me for a *furfante!* Even though it were only a senseless bird, it irritated me. I scolded him back; we both got angry; the more I scolded in German, the more he abused me in Italian.

Suddenly I heard some one laughing behind me. I turned quickly, and perceived the painter of the morning. "What nonsense are you at now!" he said. "I have been waiting for you for half an hour. The air has grown cooler: we will go to a garden in the suburbs where you will find several fellow-countrymen, and perhaps learn something further of the German Countess."

I was charmed with this proposal, and we set out immediately, the parrot screaming out abuse of me as I left him.

After we had walked for a long while outside of the city, ascending

by a narrow, stony pathway an eminence dotted with villas and vineyards, we reached a small garden very high up, where several young men and maidens were sitting in the open air about a round table. As soon as we made our appearance they all signed to us to keep silence, and pointed towards the other end of the garden, where in a large, vine-wreathed arbour two beautiful ladies were sitting opposite each other at a table. One was singing, while the other accompanied her on the guitar. Between them stood a pleasant-looking gentleman, who occasionally beat time with a small baton. The setting sun shone through the vine-leaves, upon the fruits and flasks of wine with which the table was provided, and upon the plump, white shoulders of the lady with the guitar. The other one grimaced so that she looked convulsed, but she sang in Italian in so extremely artistic a manner that the sinews in her neck stood out like cords.

Just as she was executing a long cadenza with her eyes turned up to the skies, while the gentleman beside her held his baton suspended in the air awaiting the moment when she would fall into the beat again, the garden gate was flung open, and a girl looking very much heated, and a young man with a pale, delicate face, entered, quarrelling violently. The conductor, startled, stood with raised baton like a petrified conjurer, although the singer had some time before snapped short her long trill and had arisen angrily from the table. All the others turned upon the new arrivals in a rage. "You savage," some one at the round table called out, "you have interrupted the most perfect tableau of the description which the late Hoffmann gives on page 347 of the 'Ladies' Annual' for 1816 of the finest of Hummel's pictures exhibited in the autumn of 1814 at the Berlin Art-Exposition!" But it did no good. "What do I care," the young man retorted, "for your tableaux of tableaux! My picture any one

may have; my sweetheart I choose to keep for myself. Oh, you faithless, false-hearted girl," he went on to his poor companion, "you fine critic to whom a painter is nothing but a tradesman, and a poet only a money-maker, you care for nothing save flirtation! May you fall to the lot, not of an honest artist, but of an old Duke with a diamond-mine and beplastered with gold and silver foil! Out with the cursed note that you tried to hide from me! What have you been scribbling? From whom did it come, or to whom is it going?"

But the girl resisted him steadfastly, and the more the other young men present tried to soothe and pacify the angry lover, the more he scolded and threatened; particularly as the girl herself did not restrain her little tongue, until at last she extricated herself, weeping aloud, from the confused coil, and unexpectedly threw herself into my arms for protection. I immediately assumed the correct attitude; but since the rest paid no attention to us, she suddenly composed her face and whispered hastily in my ear, "You odious Receiver! it is all on your account. There, stuff the wretched note into your pocket; you will find out from it where we live. When you approach the gate, at the appointed hour, turn into the lonely street on the right hand."

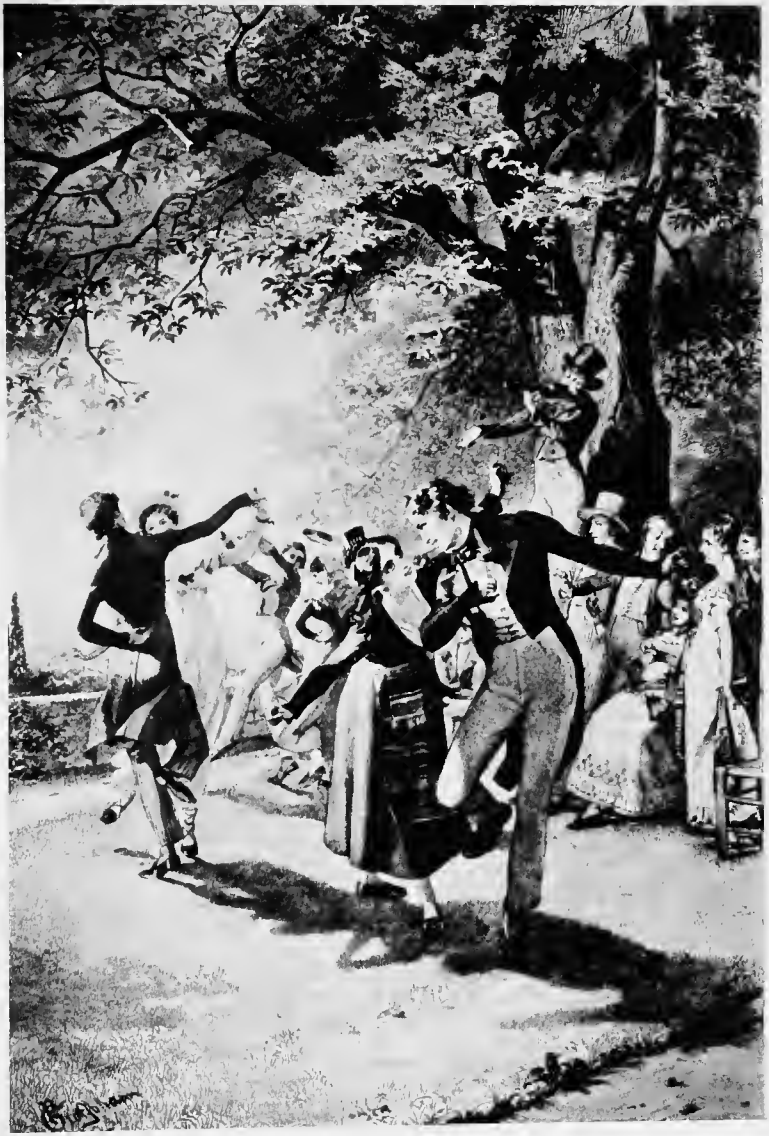
I was too much amazed to utter a word, for, now that I looked closely, I recognized her at once; actually it was the pert lady's-maid of the Castle who had brought me the flask of wine on that lovely Sunday afternoon. She never looked as pretty as now, when, heated by her quarrel, she leaned against my shoulder and her black curls hung down over my arm. "But, dear ma'amselle," I said in astonishment, "how do you come——" "For heaven's sake hush!—be quiet!" she replied, and in an instant, before I could fairly collect myself, she had left me and had fled across the garden.

Meanwhile, the others had almost entirely forgotten the original

cause of the turmoil, and now took a pleasing interest in proving to the young man that he was intoxicated,—a great disgrace for an honourable painter. The stout, smiling gentleman from the arbour, who was—as I afterwards learned—a great connoisseur and patron of Art, and who was always ready to lend his aid for the love of Science, had thrown aside his baton, and showed his broad face, fairly shining with good humour, in the midst of the thickest confusion, zealously striving to restore peace and order, but regretting between-whiles the loss of the long cadenza, and of the beautiful tableau which he had taken such pains to arrange.

In my heart all was as serenely bright as on that blissful Sunday when I had played on my fiddle far into the night at the open window where stood the flask of wine. Since the rumpus showed no signs of abating, I hastily pulled out my violin, and without more ado played an Italian dance, popular among the mountains, which I had learned at the old castle in the forest.

All turned their heads to listen. "Bravo! Bravissimo! A delicious idea!" cried the merry connoisseur of Art, running from one to another to arrange a rustic *divertissement*, as he called it. He made a beginning himself by leading out the lady who had played the guitar in the arbour. Thereupon he began to dance with extraordinary artistic skill, and describe all sorts of letters on the grass with the points of his toes, really trilling with his feet, and now and then jumping pretty high in the air. But he soon had enough of it, for he was rather corpulent. His jumps grew fewer and clumsier, until at last he withdrew from the circle, puffing violently, and mopping the moisture from his forehead with a snowy pocket-handkerchief. Meanwhile, the young man, who had regained his composure, brought from the inn some castanets, and before I was aware all were dancing merrily beneath the trees. The sun had set, but the



crimson sky in the west cast bright reflections among the shadows, and upon the old walls and the half-buried columns covered with ivy in the depths of the garden, while below the vineyards we could see the Eternal City bathed in the evening glow. The dance in the still, clear air was charming, and my heart within me laughed to see how the slender girls and the lady's-maid glided among the trees with arms upraised like heathen wood-nymphs, and kept time to the music with their castanets. At last I could no longer restrain myself; I joined their ranks, and danced away merrily, still fiddling all the time.

I had been hopping about thus for some minutes, not noticing that the others were beginning to be tired and were dropping out of the dance, when I felt some one twitch me by the coat-tail. It was the lady's-maid. "Don't be a fool," she said under her breath; "you are jumping about like a kid! Read your note, and come soon; the beautiful young Countess awaits you." She slipped out of the garden in the twilight and vanished among the vineyards.

My heart beat fast; I longed to follow her. Fortunately, a waiter was just lighting the lantern over the garden gate. I took out my note, which contained a somewhat rudely pencilled plan of the gate and the streets leading to it, just as I had been directed by the lady's-maid, and in addition the words 'Eleven o'clock, at the little door.'

Two long hours to wait! Nevertheless I should have set out immediately, for I could not stay still, had not the painter, who had brought me hither, rushed up. "Did you speak to the girl?" he asked. "I cannot see her now. It was the German Countess's maid." "Hush, hush!" I replied; "the Countess is still in Rome." "So much the better," said the painter; "come then and drink her health." And in spite of all I could say he forced me to return to the garden with him.

It looked quite deserted. The merry company had departed, and were sauntering towards Rome, each lad with his lass upon his arm. We could hear them talking and laughing among the vineyards in the quiet evening, until at last their voices died away in the valley below, lost in the rustling of the trees and the murmur of the stream. I stayed with my painter and Herr Eckbrecht, which was the name of the other young painter who had been quarrelling with the maid. The moon shone brilliantly through the tall, dark evergreens; a candle on the table before us flickered in the breeze and gleamed over the wine spilled copiously around it. I had to sit down with my companions, and my painter chatted with me about my native village, my travels, and my plans for the future. Herr Eckbrecht had seated upon his knee the pretty girl who had brought us our wine, and was teaching her the accompaniment of a song on the guitar. Her slender fingers soon picked out the correct chords, and they sang together an Italian song; first he sang a verse, and then the girl sang the next; it sounded deliciously, in the clear, bright evening. When the girl was called away, Herr Eckbrecht, taking no further notice of us, leaned back on his bench with his feet on a low stool and played and sang many an exquisite song. The stars glittered; the landscape turned to silver in the moonlight; I thought of the Lady fair, and of my far-off home, and quite forgot the painter at my side. Herr Eckbrecht had occasionally to tune his instrument; whereat he grew downright angry, and at last he screwed a string so tight that it broke, whereupon he tossed aside the guitar and sprang to his feet, noticing for the first time that my painter had laid his head on his arm upon the table and was fast asleep. He hastily wrapped around him a white cloak which hung on a bough near by, then suddenly paused, glanced keenly at my painter, and then at me several times, then seated himself on the

table directly in front of me, cleared his throat, settled his cravat, and instantly began to hold forth to me. "Beloved hearer and fellow-countryman," he said, "since the bottles are nearly empty, and morality is indisputably the first duty of a citizen when the virtues are on the wane, I feel myself moved, out of sympathy for a fellow-countryman, to present for your consideration a few moral axioms. It might be supposed," he went on, "that you are a mere youth, whereas your coat has evidently seen its best years; it might be supposed that you had leaped about like a satyr; nay, some might maintain that you are a vagabond, because you are out here in the country and play the fiddle; but I am influenced by no such superficial considerations; I form my judgment on your delicately chiselled nose; I take you for a strolling genius." His ambiguous phrases irritated me; I was about to retort sharply. But he gave me no chance to speak. "Observe," he said, "how you are puffed up by a modicum of praise. Retire within yourself and ponder upon your perilous vocation. We geniuses—for I am one too—care as little for the world as it cares for us; without any ado, in the seven-league boots which we bring into the world with us, we stride on directly into eternity. A most lamentable, inconvenient straddling position this,—one leg in the future, where nothing is to be discerned but the rosy morn and the faces of future children, the other leg still in the middle of Rome, in the Piazza del Popolo, where the entire present century would fain seize the opportunity to advance, and clings to the boot tight enough to pull the leg off! And then all this restlessness, wine-bibbing, and hunger solely for an immortal eternity! And look you at my comrade there on the bench, another genius; his time hangs heavy on his hands here and now, what under heaven is he to do in eternity? Yes, my highly-esteemed comrade, you and I and the sun rose early together this morning, and have

pondered and painted all day long, and it was all beautiful,—and now the drowsy night passes its furred sleeve over the world and wipes out all the colours." He kept on talking thus for a long while, his hair all dishevelled with dancing and drinking, and his face looking deadly pale in the moonlight.

But I was seized with a horror of him and of his wild talk, and when he turned and addressed the sleeping painter I took advantage of the opportunity and slipped round the table, without being perceived by him, and out of the garden. Thence, alone and glad at heart, I descended through the vine-trellises into the wide moonlit valley.

The clocks in the city were striking ten. Behind me, in the quiet night, I still heard an occasional note of the guitar, and at times the voices of the two painters, going home at last, were audible. I ran on as quickly as possible, that they might not overtake me.

At the city gate I turned into the street on the right hand, and hurried on with a throbbing heart among the silent houses and gardens. To my amazement, I suddenly found myself in the very Square with the fountain, for which, by daylight, I had vainly searched. There stood the solitary summer-house again in the glorious moonlight, and again the Lady fair was singing the same Italian song as on the evening before. In an ecstasy I tried first the low door, then the house door, and at last the big garden gate, but all were locked. Then first it occurred to me that eleven had not yet struck. I was irritated by the slow flight of time, but good manners forbade my climbing over the garden gate as I had done yesterday. Therefore I paced the lonely Square to and fro for a while, and at last again seated myself upon the basin of the fountain and resigned myself to meditation and calm expectancy.

The stars twinkled in the skies; the Square was quiet and deserted;

I listened with delight to the song of the Lady fair, as it mingled with the ripple of the fountain. All at once I perceived a white figure

approach from the opposite side of the Square and go directly towards the little garden door. I peered eagerly through the dazzling moonlight,—it was the queer painter in his white cloak. He drew forth a key quickly, unlocked the door, and, before I knew it, was within the garden.

I had from the first entertained a special dislike of this painter on account of his nonsensical talk. But now I fell into a rage with him. "The low fellow is certainly intoxicated again," I thought; "he has got the key from the maid, and intends to surprise, and perhaps to assault, the Lady fair." And I rushed precipitately through the low door, which was still open, into the garden.

When I entered, all was quiet and lonely. The folding-doors of the summer house were open, and a ray of lamplight issuing from it played upon the grass and flowers near. Even from a distance I could see the interior. In a magnificent apartment, hung with green and partially illumined by a lamp with a white shade, the lovely Lady fair with her guitar was reclining on a silken lounge, never dreaming, in her innocence, of the danger without.

I had not much time, however, to look, for I perceived the white figure among the shrubbery, stealthily approaching the summer-house from the opposite side, while the song floating on the air from the house was so melancholy that it went to my very soul. I therefore took no long time for reflection, but broke off a stout bough from a tree, and rushed at the white-cloaked figure, shouting "Murder!" so that the garden rang again.

The painter when he beheld me appear thus unexpectedly took to his heels, screaming frightfully. I screamed louder still. He ran towards the house, and I after him, and I had very nearly caught him, when I became entangled in some plaguy trailing vines, and measured my length upon the ground just before the front door.

"So it is you, is it, you fool!" I heard some one say above me. "You frightened me nearly to death." I picked myself up, and when I had wiped my eyes clear of dust, I saw before me the lady's-maid, from whose shoulders the white cloak was just falling. "But," said I, in confusion, "was not the painter here?" "He was," she replied, saucily; "at least his cloak was, which he put around me when I met him at the gate, because I was cold." The Lady fair, hearing the noise, sprang up from the lounge and came out to us. My heart beat as if it would burst; but what was my dismay when I looked at her, and instead of the lovely Lady fair saw an entire stranger!

She was a rather tall, stout lady, with a haughty, hooked nose and high-arched black eyebrows, very beautiful and imposing. She looked at me so majestically out of her big, glittering eyes that I was overwhelmed with awe. So confused was I that I could only make bow after bow, and at last I attempted to kiss her hand. But she snatched it from me, and said something in Italian to her maid which I could not understand.

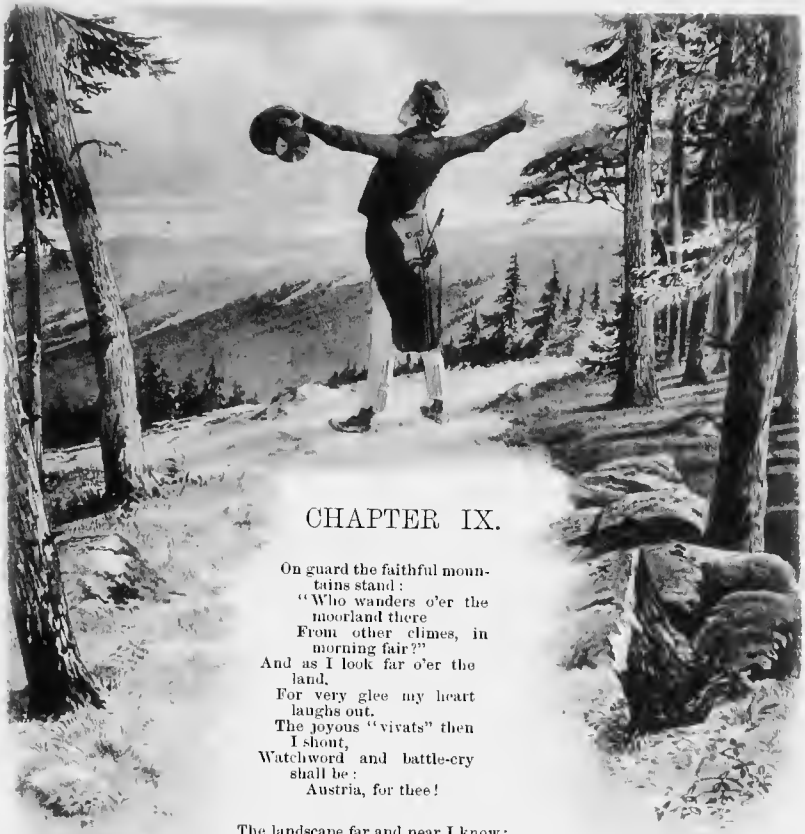
Meanwhile, the racket I had made had aroused the entire neighbourhood. Dogs barked, children screamed, and men's voices were heard, approaching the garden. The Lady gave me another glance, as though she would have liked to pierce me through and through with fiery bullets, then turned hastily and went into the room, with a haughty, forced laugh, slamming the door directly in my face. The maid seized me by the sleeve and pulled me towards the garden gate.

"Your stupidity is beyond belief!" she said in the most spiteful way as we went along. I too was furious. "What the devil did you mean," I said, "by telling me to come here?" "That's just it!" exclaimed the girl. "My Countess favoured you so,—first threw

flowers out of the window to you, sang songs—and *this* is her reward! But there is absolutely nothing to be done with you; you positively throw away your luck." "But," I rejoined, "I meant the Countess from Germany, the lovely Lady fair——" "Oh," she interrupted me, "she went back to Germany long ago, with your crazy passion for her. And you'd better run after her! No doubt she is pining for you, and you can play the fiddle together and gaze at the moon, only for pity's sake let me see no more of you!"

All was confusion about us by this time. People from the next garden were climbing over the fence armed with clubs, others were searching among the paths and avenues; frightened faces in nightcaps appeared here and there in the moonlight; it seemed as if the devil had let loose upon us a mob of evil spirits. The lady's-maid was nowise daunted. "There, there goes the thief!" she called out to the people, pointing across the garden. Then she pushed me out of the gate and clapped it to behind me.

There I stood once more beneath the stars in the deserted Square, as forlorn as when I had seen it first the day before. The fountain, which had but now seemed to sparkle as merrily in the moonlight as if cherubs were flitting up and down in it, plashed on, but all joy and happiness were buried beneath its waters. I determined to turn my back forever on treacherous Italy, with its crazy painters, its oranges, and its lady's-maids, and that very hour I wandered forth through the gate.



CHAPTER IX.

On guard the faithful mountains stand:
"Who wanders o'er the moorland there
From other climes, in morning fair?"
And as I look far o'er the land,
For very glee my heart laughs out.
The joyous "vivats" then I shout,
Watchword and battle-cry shall be:
Austria, for thee!

The landscape far and near I know;
The birds and brooks and forests fair
Send me their greetings on the air;
The Danube sparkles down below;
St. Stephen's spire far in the blue
Seems waving me a welcome too.
Warm to its core my heart shall be,
Austria, for thee!

I WAS standing on the summit of a mountain whence the first view of Austria can be had, and I waved my hat joyfully in the air as I sang the last verse, when suddenly from the forest behind me some fine instrumental music joined in. I turned quickly and per-

ceived three young fellows in long blue cloaks, one playing a hautboy, another a clarionet, and the third, who wore an old three-cornered hat, a horn. They played an accompaniment to my song which made the woods ring again. I, nothing loath, took out my fiddle, and played and sang with a will. Then one glanced meaningly at the others; he who played the horn stopped puffing out his cheeks and took the instrument down from his mouth; at last they all ceased playing, and stared at me. I ended my performance also, and in turn stared at them. "We supposed," the cornetist said at last, "from the length of the gentleman's coat that he was a travelling Englishman, journeying afoot here to admire the beauties of nature, and we thought we might perhaps earn a trifle for our own travels. But the gentleman seems to be a musician himself." "Properly speaking, a Receiver," I interposed, "and I come at present directly from Rome; but, as it is some time since I received anything, I have paid my way with my violin." "'Tis not worth much nowadays," said the cornetist, as he betook himself to the woods again, and began fanning with his cocked hat a fire that they had kindled there. "Wind-instruments are more profitable," he continued. "When a noble family is seated quietly at their mid-day meal, and we unexpectedly enter their vaulted vestibule and all three begin to blow with all our might, a servant is sure to come running out to us with money or food, just to get rid of the noise. But will you not share our repast?"

The fire in the forest was burning cheerily, the morning was fresh; we all sat down on the grass, and two of the musicians took from the fire a can in which there was coffee with milk. Then they brought forth some bread from the pockets of their cloaks, and each dipped it in the can and drank turn about with such relish that it was a pleasure to see them. But the cornetist said, "I never could endure

the black slops," and, after handing me a huge slice of bread and butter, he brought out a bottle of wine, from which he offered me a draught. I took a good pull at it, but had to put it down in a hurry with my face all of a pucker, for it tasted like 'old Gooseberry.' "The wine of the country," said the cornetist; "but Italy has probably spoilt your German taste."

Then he rummaged in his wallet, and finally produced from among all sorts of rubbish an old, tattered map of the country, in the corner of which the emperor in his royal robes was still to be discerned, a sceptre in his right hand, the orb in his left. This map he carefully spread out upon the ground; the others drew nearer, and they all consulted together as to their route.

"The vacation is nearly over," said one; "let us turn to the left as soon as we leave Linz, so as to be in Prague in time." "Upon my word!" exclaimed the cornetist. "Whom do you propose to pipe to on that road? Nobody there save wood-choppers and charcoal-burners; no culture nor taste for art,—no station where one can spend a night for nothing!" "Oh, nonsense!" rejoined the other. "I like the peasants best; they know where the shoe pinches, and are not so particular if you sometimes blow a false note." "That is, you have no *point d'honneur*," said the cornetist. "*Odi profanum vulgus et arceo*, as the Latin has it." "Well, there must be some churches on the road," struck in the third; "we can stop at the Herr Pastors'." "No, I thank you," said the cornetist; "they give little money, but long sermons on the folly of philandering about the world when we might be acquiring knowledge, and they wax specially eloquent when they sniff in me a future member of their fraternity. No, no, *clericus clericum non decimat.* But why be in such a hurry? The Herr Professors are still at Carlsbad, and are sure not to be precise about the very day." "Nay,

distinguendum est inter et inter," replied the other; "*quod licet Jovi, non licet bovi!*"

I now saw that they were students from Prague, and I conceived a great respect for them, especially as they spoke Latin like their mother-tongue. "Is the gentleman a student?" the cornetist asked me. I replied modestly that I had always been very fond of study, but that I had had no money. "That's of no consequence," said the cornetist; "we have neither money nor rich patrons, but we get along by mother-wit. *Aurora musis amica,* which means, being interpreted, 'Do not waste too much time at breakfast.' But when the bells at noon echo from tower to tower, and from mountain to mountain, and the scholars crowd out of the old dark lecture-room, and swarm shouting through the streets, we betake us to the Capuchin monastery, to the father who presides in the refectory, where there is sure to be a table spread for us, or if not actually spread there will be at least a dish apiece, and we fall to, and perfect ourselves at the same time in our Latin. So you see we study right ahead from day to day. And when at last the vacation comes, and all the others depart for their homes, by coach or on horseback, then we stroll forth through the streets and through the city gate with our instruments under our cloaks and the world before us."

I can't tell how it was, but, while he spoke, the thought that such learned people were so forlorn and forsaken in this world, went to my very heart. And then I thought of myself, and how I was not much better off, and the tears came into my eyes. The cornetist eyed me askance. "I wouldn't give a fig," he went on, "to travel with horses, and coffee, and freshly-made beds, and nightcaps and bootjacks, all ordered beforehand. It's just the delightful part of it that, when we set out early in the morning, and the birds of passage are winging their flight high in the air above us, we do not

know what chimney is smoking for us to-day, and can never foresee what special piece of luck may befall us before evening." "Yes," said the other, "and wherever we go, and take out our instruments, people are merry; and when we play at noon in the vestibule of some great country-house, the maids will dance before the door, and their masters and mistresses will have the drawing-room door opened a little, the better to hear the music, and the clatter of plates and the smell of the roast float out through the chink, and the young misses at table wellnigh twist their necks off to see the musicians outside." "That's true!" exclaimed the cornetist, with sparkling eyes. "Let who will pore over their compendiums, we choose to study in the vast picture-book which the dear God spreads open before us! Yes, the gentleman may believe me, we make the right sort of fellows, who know how to preach to the peasants from the pulpit and to bang the cushion, so that the clodpoles down below are ready to burst with humiliation and edification."

At hearing them talk thus, I became so pleased and interested that I longed to be a student too. I could have listened forever, for I enjoy the conversation of men of learning, from whom much is to be gained. But we had no real, sensible conversation, for one of the students was worried because the vacation was so nearly at an end. He put his clarionet together, set up a sheet of music on his knees, and began to practise a difficult passage from a mass which was to be played when they returned to Prague. There he sat and fingered and played away, sometimes so false that it fairly pierced your ears and you couldn't hear your own voice.

Suddenly the cornetist exclaimed in his bass tones, "I have it!" and down came his fist on the map before him. The other stopped practising for a moment, and looked at him in surprise. "Hark ye," said the cornetist, "there is a castle not far from Vienna, and in

that castle there is a porter, and that porter is my cousin! Dearest fellow-students, that must be our goal; we must pay our respects to my cousin, and he will arrange for our further journey." When I heard that, I sprang to my feet. "Doesn't he play on the bassoon?" I cried. "Is he not tall and straight, with a big, prominent nose?" The cornetist nodded, upon which I embraced him so enthusiastically that his three-cornered hat fell off, and we all immediately determined to take the mail-boat on the Danube to the castle of the beautiful Countess.

When we arrived at the wharf all was ready for departure. The fat host before whose inn the ship had lain all night was standing broad and cheery in his door-way, which he quite filled, shouting out all sorts of jokes and farewell speeches, while from every window a girl's head was poked out nodding to the sailors, who were just carrying the last packages aboard. An elderly gentleman with a gray overcoat and a black neckerchief, who was also going in the boat, stood on the shore talking very earnestly with a slim young fellow in leather breeches and a trig scarlet jacket, mounted on a magnificent chestnut. To my great surprise, they seemed to glance at times towards me, and to be speaking of me. At last the old gentleman laughed, and the slim young fellow cracked his riding-whip and galloped off through the fresh morning across the shining landscape, with the larks soaring above him.

Meanwhile, the students and I had combined our resources. The captain laughed and shook his head when the cornetist counted out our passage-money to him in coppers, for which we had diligently searched every corner of our pockets. I shouted aloud when I once more saw the Danube before me, we hurried aboard, the captain gave the signal, and away we glided in the brilliant morning sunshine past the meadows and the mountains.

The birds in the woods were singing, and the morning bells echoed afar from the villages on each side of us, while overhead the larks' clear notes were now and then heard. On the boat a canary-bird in its cage trilled and twittered back so that it was a delight to listen to it.

It belonged to a pretty young girl who was on the boat with us. She kept the cage close beside her, and under the other arm she had a small bundle of linen; she sat by herself, quite still, looking in great content, now at her new travelling-shoes, which peeped out from beneath her petticoats, and now down at the water, while the morning sun shone on her white forehead, above which the hair was neatly parted. I noticed that the students would have liked to engage her in polite discourse, for they kept passing to and fro before her, and the cornetist, whenever he did so, cleared his throat, and settled, first his cravat, and then his three-cornered hat. But their courage failed them, and moreover the girl cast down her eyes as soon as they approached her.

They seemed, besides, to stand in special awe of the elderly gentleman in the gray overcoat, who was now sitting on the other side of the boat, and whom they took for a divine. He held an open breviary, in which he was reading, looking up from it frequently to admire the lovely scenery, while the gilt edges of the book and the gay pictures of saints laid between its leaves shone brilliantly in the sunlight. He was perfectly well aware, too, of what was going on around him, and soon recognized the birds by their feathers, for before long he addressed one of the students in Latin, whereupon all three approached him, took off their hats, and made answer also in Latin.

Meanwhile, I had seated myself at the prow of the boat, where, highly delighted, I dangled my legs above the water, gazing, while

the boat glided onward and the waves below me leaped and foamed, constantly into the blue distance, watching towers and castles one after another emerge from the dim depths of green, grow and grow upon the sight, and finally recede and vanish behind us. "If I had but wings at this moment!" I thought; and at last in my impatience I drew forth my dear violin and played all my oldest pieces, which I had learned at home and at the castle of the Lady fair.

All at once some one behind me tapped me on the shoulder. It was the reverend gentleman, who had laid aside his book, and had been listening to me for a while. "Aha," he said laughing, "aha, my young *ludi magister* is forgetting to eat and drink." Whereupon he bade me put away my fiddle and take a bit of luncheon with him, and he then led me to a pleasant little arbour which the boatmen had erected in the centre of the boat out of young birches and firs. He had a table placed beneath it, and I and the students, and even the young girl, were invited to sit down around it upon the casks and packages.

The reverend gentleman now produced cold meat and bread and butter, which had all been carefully wrapped in paper, and took from a case several bottles of wine and a silver goblet, gilt inside, which he filled, tasted first himself, then smelled, tasted again, and finally presented to each of us in turn. The students sat bolt upright on their casks, and only sipped a little, so great was their awe. The girl, too, just dipped her little beak in the goblet, glancing shyly first at me and then at the students; but the oftener she looked at us the bolder she grew.

At last she informed the reverend gentleman that she was leaving her home for the first time, to go into service at a certain castle, and as she spoke I blushed all over, for the castle she mentioned was that of the Lady fair. "Then she is my future lady's-maid!" I thought,

staring at her, and feeling almost giddy. "There is soon to be a grand wedding at the castle," said his reverence. "Yes," replied the girl, who would have liked to learn more of the matter; "they say it is an old secret attachment, but that the Countess could never be brought to give her consent." His reverence replied only by 'hm! hm!' refilling his goblet, and sipping from it with a thoughtful air. I leaned forward with both elbows on the table, that I might lose no word of the conversation. His reverence observed it. "Let me tell you," he began again, "that both Countesses sent me forth to discover whether the bridegroom be not in the country hereabouts. A lady wrote from Rome that he left there some time ago." When he began about the lady in Rome I blushed again. "Is your reverence acquainted with the bridegroom?" I asked, in confusion. "No," replied the old gentleman; "but they say he is a gay bird." "Oh, yes," said I, hastily, "a bird that escapes as soon as it can from every cage, and sings gaily when it regains its freedom." "And wanders about in foreign countries," the old gentleman continued, composedly, "goes everywhere at night, and sleeps on door-steps in the daytime." That vexed me extremely. "Reverend sir," I exclaimed, with some heat, "you have been falsely informed. The bridegroom is a slender, moral, promising youth, who has been living in luxury in an old castle in Italy, and has associated solely with Countesses, famous painters, and lady's-maids, who knows perfectly well how to take care of his money, if he had any, who——" "Come, come, I had no idea that you knew him so well," the divine here interrupted me, laughing so heartily that he grew quite purple in the face and the tears rolled down his cheeks. "But I heard," the girl interposed, "that the bridegroom was a stout, very wealthy gentleman." "Good heavens, yes, yes, to be sure! Confusion worse confounded!" exclaimed his reverence, laughing so that it brought

on a fit of coughing. When he had somewhat recovered himself, he raised his goblet aloft and cried, "Here's to the bridal pair!" I did not know what to make of the reverend gentleman and his talk, and I was ashamed, because of my adventures in Rome, to tell him here before all these people that I myself was the missing thrice happy bridegroom.

The goblet kept passing from hand to hand; the reverend gentleman had a kind word for every one, so that all liked him, and finally the entire company chatted gaily together. The students grew more and more loquacious, recounting their experiences in the mountains, and at last brought out their instruments and played away merrily. The cool breeze from the water sighed through the leaves of the arbour, the afternoon sun gilded the woods and vales which flew past us, while the shores echoed back the notes of the horn. And when the reverend gentleman, stimulated by the music, grew more and more genial, and told us stories of his youth, how in vacation-time he too had wandered over hills and dales, and had been often hungry and thirsty, but always happy, and how, in fact, a student's whole life, from its first day in the narrow, dry lecture-room to its last, is one long vacation, then the students drank all around once more, and struck up a song, that re-echoed among the distant mountains:

"The birds are southward winging
Their yearly, airy flight,
And roving lads are swinging
Their caps in morning's light;
We students thus are going,
And, when the gates are nigh,
Our trumpets shall be blowing,
In token of good-bye.
A long farewell we give thee,
O Prague, for we must leave thee,


Gretschmann 1885

Et habeat bonam pacem,
Qui sedet post fornacem!

"When through the towns we're going
At night, the windows shine,
Behind their curtains showing
Full many a damsel fine.
We play at many a gate-way,
And when our throats are dry
We call mine host, and straightway
He treats us generously;
And o'er a goblet foaming
We rest awhile from roaming.
Venit ex sua domo—
Beatus ille homo!

"When roaming through the forest
Cold Boreas whistles shrill,
'Tis then our need is sorest;
Wet through on plain and hill,
Our cloaks the winds are tearing,
Our shoes are worn and old,
Still playing, onward faring,
In spite of rain and cold.
Beatus ille homo
Qui sedet in sua domo
Et sedet post fornacem
Et habeat bonam pacem!"

I, the captain, and the girl, although we did not understand Latin, joined gaily in the last lines of each verse; but I was the gayest of all, for I had caught a glimpse in the distance of my toll-house, and soon afterwards the castle shone among the trees in the light of the setting sun.

CHAPTER X.

The boat touched the shore, and we all left it as quickly as possible, and scattered about in the meadows, like birds suddenly set free from the cage. The reverend gentleman took a hasty leave of us, and strode off towards the castle. The students repaired to a retired dingle, where they could shake out their cloaks, wash themselves in the brook, and shave one another. The new lady's-maid, with her canary-bird and her bundle, set out for an inn, the hostess of which I had recommended to her as an excellent person, and where she wished to change her gown before she presented herself at the castle. As for me,—the lovely evening shone right into my heart, and as soon as all the rest had disappeared I lost not a moment, but ran directly to the castle garden.

My toll-house, which I had to pass, was standing on the old spot, the tall trees in the castle garden were still murmuring above it, and

a yellow-hammer, which always used to sing at sunset in the chestnut-tree before the window, was singing again, as if nothing in the world had happened since I last heard him. The toll-house window was open; I ran up to it with delight and looked in. There was no one there, but the clock in the corner was ticking away, the writing-table stood by the window, and the long pipe in the corner as of old. I could not resist the temptation to climb through the window and seat myself at the writing-table before the big account-book. Again the sunlight shone golden-green through the chestnut boughs upon the figures in the open book, again the bees buzzed in and out of the window, and again the yellow-hammer's jocund song sounded from the tree outside. All at once the door of the sleeping-room opened, and a tall, old Receiver, in my dotted dressing-gown, entered! He paused on the threshold upon beholding me thus unexpectedly, took his spectacles quickly from his nose, and looked angrily at me. Not a little alarmed, I started up, and, without saying a word, ran out of the door and through the little garden, where I was very nearly tripped up by the confounded potato-vines which the old Receiver had planted, evidently by the Porter's advice, in place of my flowers. I heard him as he came out of the door scolding after me, but I was mounted atop of the garden wall, and gazing with a throbbing heart over into the castle garden.

Ah, how the birds were flitting and twittering and singing! The lawns and paths were deserted, but the gilded tree-tops nodded a welcome to me in the evening breeze, and on one side up through masses of dark green foliage gleamed the Danube.

On a sudden I heard sung from the depths of the garden

"When the yearning heart is stilled
As in dreams, the forest sighing,
To the listening earth replying,

Tells the thoughts with which 'twas filled,
Days long vanished, soothing sorrow,—
From the Past a light they borrow,
And the heart is gently thrilled."

The voice and the song were strangely familiar, as if I had heard them somewhere in a dream. I pondered over and over again, and at last exclaimed, joyfully, "It is Herr Guido!" swinging myself quickly down into the garden. It was the self-same song that he had sung on the balcony of the Italian inn on that summer evening when I saw him for the last time.

He went on singing, while I bounded over beds and hedges towards the singer. But as I emerged from between the last clumps of rose-bushes I suddenly paused spell-bound. For on the green opening beside the little lake with the swans, clearly illuminated in the ruddy evening light, on a stone bench sat the lovely Lady fair in a beautiful dress, with a wreath of red and white roses on her black hair, and downcast eyes, tracing lines on the greensward with her riding-whip, just as she had sat in the skiff when I was forced to sing her the song of the Lady fair. Opposite her sat another young lady, with brown curls clustering on a plump white neck, which was turned towards me; she was singing to a guitar, while the swans glided in wide circles on the placid water. All at once the Lady fair raised her eyes, and gave a scream on perceiving me. The other lady turned round towards me so quickly that her brown curls fell over her eyes, and when she saw me she burst into a fit of immoderate laughter, sprang up from the bench, and clapped her hands thrice. Whereupon a crowd of little girls in white short skirts with red and green sashes came running out from among the rose-bushes, so that I could not imagine where they had all been hiding. They had long gar-

lands of flowers in their hands, and quickly formed a circle around me, dancing and singing,—

"With ribbons gay of violets blue
The bridal wreath we bring thee;
The merry dance we lead thee to,
And wedding songs we sing thee.
Ribbons gay of violets blue,
Bridal wreath we bring thee."

It was from "Der Freischütz." I recognized some of the little singers; they were girls from the village. I pinched their cheeks, and tried to escape from the circle, but the roguish little things would not let me out. I could not tell what to make of it all, and stood there perfectly dazed.

Suddenly a young man in hunting costume emerged from the shrubbery. Hardly could I believe my eyes,—it was merry Herr Lionardo! The little girls now opened the circle and stood as if spell-bound on one foot, with the other stretched out, holding the garlands of flowers high above their heads with both hands. Herr Lionardo took the hand of the lovely Lady fair, who had risen, and had only now and then glanced at me, and, leading her up to me, said,—

"Love—on this point philosophers are unanimous—is one of the most courageous qualities of the human heart: it shatters with a glance of fire the barriers of rank and station, the world is too confined for it, eternity too brief. It is, so to speak, a poet's robe, in which every dreamer enwraps himself once in this cold world, for a journey to Arcadia. And the farther two parted lovers wander from each other, the more beautiful and the richer are the folds of the robe, the more surprising and wonderful is its extent, as it sweeps behind them, so

that one really cannot travel far without treading on a couple of such trains. O beloved Herr Receiver, and bridegroom! although wrapped in this robe you reached the shores of the Tiber, the little hands of your present bride held you fast by the extreme end of the train, and, however you might fiddle and fume, you had to return within the magic influence of her beautiful eyes. And since this is so, you two dear, foolish people, wrap yourselves both up in this blessed robe, forget all the rest of the world, love like turtle-doves, and be happy!"

Hardly had Herr Lionardo finished his speech when the other young lady who had sung the song approached me, crowned me with a wreath of fresh myrtle, and as she was arranging it, with her face close to my own, archly sang,—

"And therefore do I crown thee,
And therefore love thee so,
Because thou oft hast moved me
With the music of thy bow."

As she retreated a step or two, "Do you remember the robbers who shook you down from the tree at night?" said she, courtesying, and giving me so arch a glance that my heart danced within me. Thereupon, without waiting for an answer, she walked around me. "Actually just the same, without any Italian affectations! But no! look, look at his fat pockets!" she exclaimed suddenly to the lovely Lady fair. "Violin, linen, razor, portmanteau, everything stuffed together!" She turned me all round as she spoke, and could scarcely say anything more for laughing. Meanwhile, the lovely Lady fair was quite silent, and could hardly raise her eyes for shame and confusion. It seemed to me that at heart she was provoked at all this jesting talk. At last her eyes filled with tears, and she hid her

face on the breast of the other lady, who first looked at her in surprise and then clasped her affectionately in her arms.

I stood there as in a dream. The longer I looked at the strange lady the more clearly I recognized her; she was in truth no other than —the young painter, Herr Guido!

I did not know what to say, and was just about to question her, when Herr Lionardo approached her and spoke in an undertone. "Does he not know yet?" I heard him ask. She shook her head. He reflected for a moment, and then said aloud, "No, no, he must be told all immediately, or there will be all kinds of fresh gossip and confusion.

"Herr Receiver," he said, turning to me, "we have not much time at present, but do me the favour to exhaust your stock of surprise and wonder as quickly as possible, that you may not hereafter, by questions, and wonderings, and head-shakings among the people about here, revive old tales and give rise to new rumours and suspicions." So saying, he drew me aside into the shrubbery, while Fräulein Guido made passes in the air with the Lady fair's riding-whip, and shook all her curls down over her eyes, which did not prevent my seeing that she was blushing violently.

"Well, then," said Herr Lionardo, "Fräulein Flora, who is trying to look as if she neither knew nor had heard anything of the whole affair, had exchanged hearts in a hurry with somebody. Whereupon somebody else appears, and with sound of trumpet and drum offers her his heart, and wishes for hers in return. But her heart is already bestowed upon somebody, and somebody's heart is in her possession, and that somebody will neither take back his heart nor give back hers. All the world exclaims,—but have you never read any romances?" I shook my head. "Well, then, at all events you have taken part in one. In brief, there was such a jumble with the hearts

that somebody—that is, I—had to take matters in hand. I sprang on my horse one warm summer night, mounted Fräulein Flora as the painter Guido on another, and rode towards the south, to conceal her in one of my lonely castles in Italy till all the fuss about the hearts should be over. But on the way we were tracked, and from the balcony of the Italian inn before which you kept, sound asleep, such admirable watch, Flora suddenly caught sight of our pursuer." "The crooked Signor, then——" "Was a spy. Therefore we secretly took to the woods, and left you to travel post alone over our prearranged route. That misled our pursuer, and my people in the mountain castle besides; they were hourly expecting the disguised Flora, and with more zeal than penetration they took you for the Fräulein. Even here at the castle they thought Flora was among the mountains: they inquired about her, they wrote to her, —did you not receive a note?" In an instant I produced the note from my pocket: "This letter, then——?" "Is addressed to me," said Fräulein Flora, who up to this point had seemed to be paying no attention to our conversation. She snatched the note from me, read it, and put it into her bosom. "And now," said Herr Lionardo, "we must hasten to the castle, where they are all waiting for us. In conclusion, as a matter of course, and as is fitting for every well-bred romance: discovery, repentance, reconciliation,—we are all happy together once more, and the wedding takes place the day after to-morrow!"

Just as he had finished, a terrific racket of drums and trumpets, horns and clarionets, was suddenly heard in the shrubbery; guns were fired at intervals, loud cheers were given, the little girls began to dance again, and heads appeared among the bushes as if they had grown out of the earth. I ran and leaped about in all the hurry and scurry, but as it began to grow dark I only gradually recognized all the

faces. The old gardener beat the drum, the students from Prague in their cloaks played away, and among them the Porter fingered his bassoon like mad. When I suddenly perceived him thus unexpectedly, I ran to him and embraced him with enthusiasm, causing him to play quite out of time. "Upon my word, if he should travel to the ends of the earth he would never be anything but a goose!" he said to the students, and then went on blowing away at his bassoon in a fury.

Meanwhile, the lovely Lady fair had privately escaped from all the noise and confusion, and had fled like a startled fawn far into the depths of the garden.

I caught sight of her in time and hurried after her. In their zeal the musicians never noticed us; after a while they thought that we had decamped to the castle, and then the entire band took up the line of march in that direction.

We, however, almost at the same moment reached a summer-house on the borders of the garden, whence through the open window there was a view of the wide, deep valley. The sun had long since set behind the mountains, a rosy haze glimmered in the warm fading twilight, through which the murmur of the Danube ascended clearer and clearer the stiller grew the air. I looked long at the lovely Countess, who stood before me heated with her flight and so close that I could almost hear her heart beat. Now that I was alone with her I could find no words to speak, so great was my awe of her. At last I took heart of grace, and clasped in mine one of her little white hands,—and in one moment her head lay on my breast and my arms were around her.

In an instant she extricated herself and turned to the window to cool her glowing cheeks in the evening air. "Ah," I cried, "my heart is full to bursting, but it all seems like a dream to

me!" "And to me too," said the lovely Lady fair. "When last summer," she went on after a while, "I came back with the Countess from Rome, where we fortunately found Fräulein Flora, and had brought her back with us, but could hear nothing of you either there or here, I never thought all this would come to pass. It was only at noon to-day that Jocky, the good, brisk fellow, came breathless into the court-yard and brought the news that you had come by the mail-boat." Then she laughed quietly to herself. "Do you remember," she said, "that time when I came out on the balcony? It was just such an evening as this, and there was music in the garden." "And he is really dead?" I asked hastily. "Whom do you mean?" replied the Lady fair, looking at me in surprise. "Your ladyship's husband," said I, "who was with you on the balcony." She flushed crimson. "What strange fancies you have in your head!" she exclaimed. "That was the Countess's son, who had just returned from his travels, and, since it happened to be my birthday, he led me out on the balcony with him that I might have a share of the cheers. Was that why you ran away?" "Good heavens, yes!" I cried, striking my forehead with my hand. She shook her head and laughed merrily.

I was so happy there beside her while she went on chatting so confidingly, that I could have sat listening until morning. I found in my pocket a handful of almonds which I had brought with me from Italy. She took some, and we sat and cracked them and gazed abroad over the quiet country. "Do you see that little white villa," she said after a while, "gleaming over there in the moonlight? The Count has given us that, with its garden and vineyard; there is where we are to live. He found out long ago that we cared for each other, and he is very fond of you, for if he had not had you with them when he was running off with Fräulein Flora they would both have been caught before the Countess had become reconciled to him, and every-

thing would have been spoiled." "Good heavens! fairest, sweetest Countess," I cried out, "my head is fairly spinning with all this unexpected and amazing information; are you talking of Herr Lionardo?" "Yes, yes," she replied; "that is what he called himself in Italy; he owns all that property over there, and he is going to marry our Countess's daughter, the lovely Flora. But why do you call me Countess?" I stared at her. "I am no Countess," she went on. "Our Countess took me into the castle and had me educated under her care when my uncle, the Porter, brought me here a poor little orphan child."

Ah, what a stone fell from my heart at these words! "God bless the Porter," I said in an ecstasy, "for being our uncle! I always set great store by him." "And he would be very fond of you," she replied, "if you would only comport yourself with more dignity, as he expresses it. You must dress with greater elegance." "Oh," I exclaimed, enchanted, "an English dress-coat, straw hat, long trousers, and spurs! And as soon as we're married we will take a trip to Italy, —to Rome,—where lovely fountains are playing, and we'll take with us the Prague students, and the Porter!" She smiled quietly, and gave me a happy glance, while the music echoed in the distance, and rockets flew up from the castle above the garden in the quiet night, and the Danube kept murmuring on, and everything, everything was delightful!

THE END.